

THE SPACE OF THE SPIRIT
an architectural trip through spirituality

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supervisor:
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Esther Grabiner (Tel Aviv University),
Marco Trisciuglio (Politecnico di Torino)

a.y. 2016 _ 2017
Politecnico di Milano
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ABSTRACT

The Space of the Spirit is a thesis that seeks an idea of an “architecture for the spirit”, opposing the concept that architecture should always be driven primarily by its function. The main point of view of this work is that nowadays, in a moment of deep existential and values crisis, at least in the western world, new ways should be found to express the needs of the contemporary human beings. These needs, on the other hand, are found in this proposal in the eternal and ancestral search for a broader dimension of existence, out of the ordinary and out of the limited human life. The architectural space, in which we live our lives, should then support and express this need.

The work is organized in two phases, developed simultaneously, corresponding to the two booklets: the theoretical background and research, and the design of a project, testing the hypothesis proposed.

The context in which I worked is Jerusalem, great crossroad of cultures, faiths, identities and, probably unavoidable conflicts. This place provided the background and direction for the research, developed in a student exchange period at Tel Aviv University, and it is the context of the project site.

After a brief introduction about the aims of the research and some thoughts of important personalities about the contemporary condition, the research moves forward to analyse the thinking developed by the anthropology of religion, very relevant in defining universal spiritual values, constant throughout history.

In the third chapter the focus moves to find these values in the space, deriving principles and elements. At the beginning are considered some example of ancient “spiritual” architectures, then a short and subjective selection of projects of the last decades and finally some spaces created by contemporary artists.

Following this is a description of a selection of “spiritual” spaces found in Jerusalem, providing other important elements to apply in the project, deriving from its context.

The project has a specific context but not a specific function, if not the one of being a place for a pause, for reflection. It is focused on the perceptive experience of the space, developing different atmospheres in which it is possible to disengage from the context, physical and cultural, in what may be called a “Luna Park of the Spirit”.

This is an open thesis, that develops an “architectural trip through spirituality”, whose end can not be more than just an invitation to look at architecture and at Man’s condition from a different perspective.

SOMMARIO

The Space of the Spirit è una tesi che indaga, in forma di ricerca e di progetto architettonico, un'idea di "architettura per lo spirito", opponendosi al principio secondo il quale l'architettura debba essere sempre generata dalla sua funzione.

Elemento cardine di questo lavoro è un'interpretazione della condizione contemporanea, in un momento di profonda crisi esistenziale e di valori, almeno per quanto riguarda il mondo occidentale, con una dimensione globale che non sempre si concilia con quella individuale, e la perdita di certezze in ogni campo. Crisi a cui è necessario rispondere trovando nuove vie per esprimere i bisogni odierni dell'essere umano. Questi bisogni sono in questa tesi ricondotti alla ricerca eterna ed ancestrale di una dimensione più vasta dell'esistenza, capace di astrarsi dall'ordinarietà e dalla condizione finita della vita umana. Lo spazio architettonico, nel quale siamo costantemente immersi nelle nostre vite, deve allora essere in grado di rispondere ed esprimere questo bisogno.

Alle due parti in cui la tesi è organizzata, sviluppate in parallelo, corrispondono due impaginati: la fase della ricerca, che fornisce lo sfondo teorico, e quella del progetto, che conferisce forma ed espressione alle ipotesi sviluppate.

Il contesto nel quale ho lavorato è la città di Gerusalemme, importantissimo crocevia di culture e identità, a cui corrispondono, forse inevitabilmente, numerosi conflitti. Pensare a questo progetto a Gerusalemme significa avere a che fare con una grande predisposizione ad una dimensione "spirituale", altra, ma al tempo stesso anche con il conflitto generato dalle identità. Ogni cosa in questa città diventa immediatamente un fatto politico, rendendo difficile ogni scelta, che non riesce mai ad essere del tutto neutra, come vorrebbe essere in questa tesi. Gerusalemme è lo sfondo su cui si muovono sia la ricerca, sviluppata durante un periodo di scambio presso l'Università di Tel Aviv, sia il progetto, che ha trovato sito in un'area molto interessante della città, centrale ma contrastata, con una vocazione "spirituale" dal punto di vista naturale e storico.

Dopo una breve introduzione agli obiettivi della ricerca, citando il pensiero di importanti personalità riguardo la condizione umana e sociale contemporanea, la ricerca si sviluppa con l'analisi della produzione socio-filosofica dell'antropologia religiosa, molto interessante nella definizione di principi spirituali universali, rimasti costanti lungo tutta la storia.

Nel terzo capitolo l'attenzione si sposta invece sulla ricerca di questi valori nello spazio architettonico, trovando principi ed elementi da sviluppare poi nel progetto. Inizialmente vengono considerati alcuni esempi di antiche architetture e spazi "spirituali", successivamente una limitata selezione di progetti degli ultimi decenni, infine alcuni spazi creati da artisti contemporanei. Nella produzione di alcuni artisti, chiamati da qualcuno "neo-mistici", è possibile infatti trovare espressi molti principi di questa ricerca, in lavori che appaiono più "liberi" rispetto all'architettura, soprattutto dal punto di vista della funzione.

Nel capitolo successivo Gerusalemme è al centro dell'attenzione: dopo una breve descrizione della storia di questa città, una serie di architetture "spirituali" viene descritta nelle sue caratteristiche spaziali, aggiungendo un importante contributo al retroterra del progetto, derivante direttamente dal contesto in cui è inserito.

La proposta progettuale ha un contesto definito ma non una funzione, se non quella di essere un luogo per un momento di pausa, di riflessione. E' stato sviluppato concentrandosi sull'esperienza percettiva dello spazio, creando diverse atmosfere in cui è possibile estraniarsi dal contesto, fisico e culturale, in un luogo che può essere definito come una sorta di "Luna Park dello Spirito".

E' questo un invito a pensare all'architettura non come oggetto da osservare ma situazione in cui interagire, come in una sorta di "gioco", estremamente serio in quanto definito da importanti regole, il cui rispetto porta le persone a compiere un primo atto di attenzione verso l'architettura stessa. Si tratta di entrare in uno spazio accettando di perdere parzialmente il controllo della propria percezione del luogo e di identità. E' un atteggiamento di "disinteressato interesse" alla ricerca del significato e dell'utilità di ciò che appare "inutile", a mio avviso così necessario al giorno d'oggi, nel mondo dell'estetica più che in quello della funzionalità.

Questa è una tesi aperta, il cui tema ha portato necessariamente ad escludere più argomenti di quelli che sono stati inclusi. E' un piccolo "viaggio architettonico attraverso la spiritualità" che vuole alla fine essere un semplice invito a pensare all'architettura e alla nostra condizione da una diversa prospettiva, considerando tutti i significati, anche impliciti, che hanno da sempre trovato luogo nelle costruzioni umane e che, nell'ultimo secolo, sono stati a volte tralasciati.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During these months in which I developed this thesis, I met many people that gave a great contribution to it. I can say that without them, this work would have been very different and way less rich, therefore I am very grateful to all of them.

I want to thank Professor Muzio and Professor Galantino for their support, they were able, in the few meetings we had, to give an important imprint and direction to the general purpose of the thesis and to the project.

I am grateful to Professor Grabiner for all her enthusiasm about my research from our first meeting, more than one year ago, and for all her support in these months.

My gratitude goes also to the Politecnico di Milano and Tel Aviv University, for having given me the great opportunity to spend these months in Israel during a student exchange, and to their libraries, in which I found relevant materials, together with the National Library of Israel and the Yad Ben Zvi Institute.

Benjie's interest and passion followed all the phases of the development of this thesis: I feel honoured and beholden to him for all his support, ranging from the books he lent me, the people I met through him, our architectural explorations and his precious English corrections.

The long conversations with Mois and Danielle about Judaism and Israeli culture gave an essential support to my little understanding of the complex range of identities that are present in this place; I am thankful to them.

I want to thank professor Cattaneo for her consistently great willingness in discussing the topics of this thesis and for her moral support in all this time.

I am truly appreciative for Amer and Mara's interest in my research and help in gaining a wider point of view on the Palestinian culture; I therefore thank Amer for his availability to being interviewed for this work, as well as Pino Musi, Peter

Abu Shanab and Father Andrea Dall'Asta.

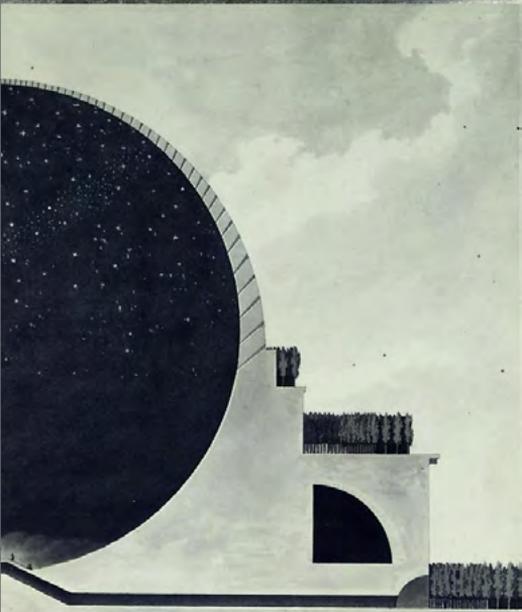
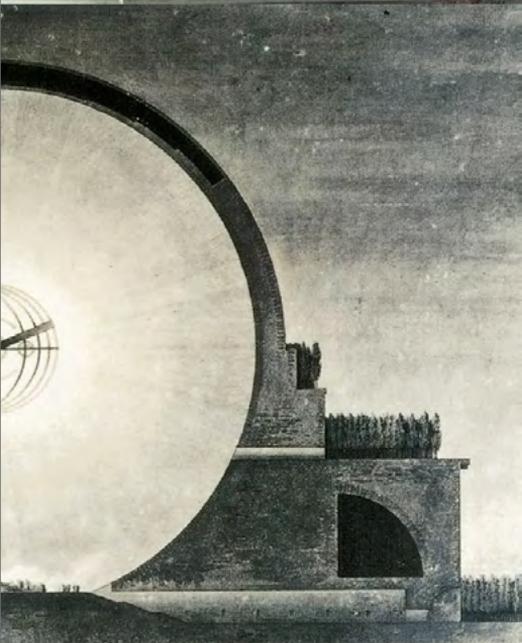
I am grateful to Shir and Aviv for their moral and logistic support in these months, as well as to all the other friends with whom I spoke and confronted on the topics of this thesis.

I want to thank all the people that helped me developing my crowdfunding campaign and all the donors that gave an important practical contribution to these months of research.

I thank my mum, my dad, Anna and Marta, for their constant great support and encouragement.

I am immensely grateful to Liah, that has sustained and stood behind me for all this time, and without whom these thesis wouldn't exist or even come up to my mind. During a conversation about people and politics, on a journey from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in summer 2015, she told me: "I think that you really underestimate the role that religion plays in human lives".

Now I finally know that she was right.



CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.A _ AN ARCHITECTURAL TRIP THROUGH
SPIRITUALITY

1.B _ WHY THIS PROJECT, IN THIS MOMENT?

1.A _ AN ARCHITECTURAL TRIP THROUGH SPIRITUALITY

“Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and more steadily one reflects on them: *the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me*. I do not need to search for them and merely conjecture them as though they were veiled in obscurity or in the transcendent region beyond my horizon; I see them before me and connect them immediately with the consciousness of my existence.”

Immanuel Kant¹

Is it possible to define universally a concept of spirituality? And what could be the space able to support this definition?

These two key questions led me to develop this thesis work during the past year, driving this “architectural trip through spirituality”.

After five years of dealing with many different architectural projects and programs, providing architectural answers to different human needs, I found myself wondering which are the very basic needs, that allow everyone to live a fulfilling life. I started to think that spirituality plays an important role between these needs.

The Oxford dictionary defines “spirituality” as “The quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things”². It is interesting to notice that no reference to religions and cultures is included in this definition. This enforces my idea of dealing with spirituality as something universal that since pre-historic time drives human reflections and needs of a quest for a broader meaning of life. Something which is able to link all human kind under the same common need.

On the other hand this definition raises complex questions due to the philosophical issues related with the topic (for instance, what is the “human spirit or soul” meaning?) as opposed to the “material” and “physical”, fields that architecture can’t avoid representing.

The philosophical questions will only be marginally touched on this research, and through a strong and subjective selection, while architecture is the core of this work. A proposition that does not intend to be a “spiritual trip through architecture” but rather an “architectural trip through spirituality”.

Nowadays, at a historical time of deep changes and diffused existential crisis,



01. Doug Wheeler,
The Illusion of Light,
 2014.
 Palazzo Grassi,
 Venezia

it seems that people are developing a new/old need of dealing with something greater than their own experience. After many years of narrowing horizons in a growing materialism and individualism, I believe that opposing the material, the useful, the functional can represent an interesting way to look at our reality. In this respect, an approach to architecture that opposes the “materialistic” can mean a wide point of view on the contemporary world.

Throughout history, the approach to spirituality has often passed through the physical experience, through art and architecture, fundamental means to get closer to what is unintelligible, irrational, other. What can architecture represent in this scenario, nowadays? What help can it bring to mankind, on a universal scale?

I have organized my thesis in two phases, simultaneously, with both located in Jerusalem.

The theoretical phase is research that touches on many fields but is always aimed towards architecture. In this way all the different contributions are meant to enlarge the horizon of this complex topic, providing interesting points of view, able to become anchors for the architectural design, the second phase of



02. Giorgio De Chirico, *L'enigma dell'oracolo*, 1910.

this thesis. The aim of the research is to provide a frame for the architectural project, moving from the specific to the general, trying to get a broader view over universal values and principles. It is a process of “looking outside oneself” that implies that the subjective component is always present, within any decision. After all subjectivity is part of the experience of architecture.

The design component represents the test of the hypothesis developed in the research, in a process of “looking inside oneself”, looking at what has been my academic experience included in this thesis. The aim is giving shape to a specific project, a space of the spirit without any other function than being a place for a pause, for reflection. It is a process that looks for the specific, from the general to the definite, to express in a specific place and time, the need of the universal, that necessarily escapes from the physical boundaries of the place.

The project and the research are based in Jerusalem because it is an incredible crossroad of cultures, a fundamental city of the three main monotheistic faiths, whose political and symbolic role is enormous, a place in which the idea of finding universal values that can link different faiths and cultures seems very contemporary and urgent. A place in which this project can find its reason to exist. On one hand Jerusalem is a rich ground in terms of spirituality, a place

in which people are used to deal everyday with this dimension. On the other hand this opens problems due to the identities that are present, very strong, very segregated and each one closed in itself. In my opinion, this makes promoting an idea of universal values harder: every single decision here brings important considerations from political and cultural points of view.

It is an ambitious purpose, but it is guided by the hope that architecture can characterize a space where people can put aside, temporarily, their cultural identity, to discover their individuality, feeling part of a larger group that is not their social identity, but the human being itself.

The final assumption of this thesis is that the need for spirituality passes through the physical experience of the spaces in which we live, of the atmosphere in which we are immersed, and that the design of the space should follow criteria that are not functional, if it is aimed to create a space of the spirit.

The need of taking a breathe, a moment out of the ordinary, a moment to pause and think, to reflect. A moment found in a specific place and time, mediated by the sensory experience. This is the Space of the Spirit, a sort of “Luna Park of the Spirit”, where the emotions can link us to what we are not able to explain rationally but we can’t avoid experiencing emotionally, a space able to become a “simulator of suspension from identity and place”, looking for a partial “universality”.



1.B _ WHY THIS PROJECT, IN THIS MOMENT?

“2000 years
we missed Jerusalem
and not Tel Aviv
we missed
the temple
and not McDonald’s
and now everybody’s talking
about common sense
economic future
Israeli shares
standard of living
and financial peace
for every piece.

and I say to you
all these things pass will pass
from the world
and forever
in this world
the longing will remain”

Mois Benarroch³

The economist Jeremy Rifkin, at the end of his book *The Zero Marginal Cost Society* traces a very interesting path that links the great economic paradigms in human history with the transformation of the human consciousness and of social ties. Enlarging the possibilities of communication and connection, human beings enlarged the horizons of their society and from primitive groups based on blood ties and tribal bonds we developed into a globalised society. Rifkin speaks about “mythological consciousness” for the forager/hunter society, “theological consciousness” for the hydraulic agricultural societies that started in the 4th-century B.C. and developed a religious identity that moved forward from the

03. *Seeking the
Space of the Spirit*,
2016.
Milano

limited blood ties. Then he explains the “ideological consciousness” of the national societies that started in the 19th-century to get a defined form, where trades stopped being local and grew to a national scale, thanks to coal-powered production, the railroad network and the full development of printing⁴. The last stage that Rifkin proposed, is the “psychological consciousness”, raised in the 20th-century with the development of the mass consumer society and the possibility of creating larger groups, where people start to empathize in larger “families”, based on common interests with like-minded other people. This is the globalised world, where the market, communications and transportation are on a global scale. Of course the previous historical consciousnesses are still present in every human being, but in a smaller proportion than in the past and with differences from one to another⁵.

What appears interesting in this brief history is that it is based not on the specific facts that usually mark history (wars, great social upheavals, natural catastrophes), but on the empathic engagement that human beings have developed in the periods of harmony, in the development of civilization. Rifkin suggests that the history of humanity shows that happiness is not to be found in materialism but, rather, in empathic engagement⁶.

Modern day society is interconnected on a global scale but I believe it also developed a crisis in dealing with the local scale, with the dimension that is proper to human being as individuals. People have developed, due also to the supremacy in every field of the “technique”, an estrangement from the world that surround them. It is very stimulating to encounter the analysis of the psychoanalysts Miguel Benasayag and Gérard Schmit in their book *Les Passions Tristes*. They support the idea that the actual values crisis (at least in the western world) is the result of the passage from a state of unconditioned hope and desire to the future (deriving firstly from religion, then from science and Positivism⁷), to a condition of total pessimism in the future, seen as a threat, after the fall of religious and positivism values, during the last century⁸. The result of this crisis is the growth of a society based on utilitarianism, where the “threat” took the place of the “desire”: but the desire creates ties between people, which is based on a cohesive society, while the threat of the future and utilitarianism put one against another, in the perception that it is necessary to save oneself alone⁹. The empathic engagement suggested by Rifkin as the basis of civilization, happiness

and development, seems to be threatened nowadays¹⁰.

As a direction to solve these problems, Benasayag and Schmit suggest the need to create ties between people through the development of a deep “uselessness” of life, based on creation and love, supporting again the idea that the uselessness is able to produce what it is really useful in our lives¹¹.

It is interesting, at this point, to consider some trends related to religion and to architecture. The drop of religiosity in the society mentioned above seems in contrast to a 2015 report by the Pew Research Center that points out how the percentage of atheists, agnostics and other people who do not affiliate themselves with any religion will drop globally in the next forty years (10% growth compared to a world population growth of 35%)¹². But at the same time these data are the result of a strong growth of population in the Third World countries, where religion (in particular Islam) is expected to keep on diffusing¹³. In fact in Europe, North America and Japan (countries with low fertility and ageing populations), the percentage of unaffiliated people is expected to grow, and in some cases even almost to duplicate¹⁴. Analysing this trend that started decades ago, Jürgen Habermas, German philosopher and sociologist, pointed out in 2007 the direct connection between existential uncertainty and religious need¹⁵.

The modern western world has developed an experience of life that, as pointed out by Mircea Eliade in 1956¹⁶, deals with a profane existence, not being able to relate the things experienced with something that goes beyond their functional or the physiological meaning, in a life that is completely different from the past, at least of the one before the industrial age.

However, in the field of architecture, we may notice that in the last decades many spaces for meditation have been built. Spaces for the memory, secular chapels¹⁷, all spaces that do not show a specific and well-defined function but rather the need of a specific atmosphere to promote a certain “spiritual” disposition. At the same time sacred spaces like churches, tried to deal with the heritage of the functionalism of the Modern Movement¹⁸, and has been started to be condemned the creation of sacred buildings driven just by functional principles and not able anymore to be a place in which the everyday life is clearly left out, to enter a different transcendent dimension, as it has been throughout history¹⁹.

Another interesting contemporary architectural topic is dealing with multi-cultural and multi-faith spaces, due to the globalization and the migrations that are bringing big masses of people from different backgrounds to live one next to the other. The attempts to create these kind of places usually results in the creation of different spaces for the different cultures, taking place one next to the



other. It can't be different than this, if the cultural and religious identities are at the core of the projects. The aim of this research is not expressing the differences and gathering them together, but rather seeking the common and give shape to it.

In this contemporary scenario I want to develop the invitation of looking at the "uselessness" as an answer and at the creation as a tool, to try to develop a better life state. This should pass through architecture, through a discipline that has in its nature the need of looking at the human needs and problems and that it is able to configure the space in which we carry out our existences. Following the architectural inclination towards spaces whose function is not completely defined but whose value and ambition is very strong, I wish to develop my project.

It is a project that seeks the common ties, the common values between human beings, from a spiritual and perceptive point of view, trying to keep together these terms that can at first glance appear to be contrast. It is a project that wants to oppose the individualistic approach of the dog-eat-dog that leads to the creation of power systems in which everything is allowed to face the threat, real or assumed²⁰. In order to do this I think that the individual should paradoxically be in the spotlight, as a unique person different from everybody, with his needs, trying to break for a second the identities that often lead people in preset systems. It is not a multi-cultural project because it does not represent any specific culture but it is open to all of them, with the idea that the identities should stay out of the space in order to achieve the fully potential of this idea, to get a real occasion of meeting, with oneself, with the other, with the transcendent. The universal values assumed are then just the necessary frame of the architectural project, that has always more than a single beneficiary, and are also the occasion of ties, of relating with something larger than each one limited experience. This should happen on a free basis, driven by each one's consciousness.

04. Pat Steir,
San Francisco
Waterfall I
1991

NOTES CHAPTER 1

1 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason (1788) in Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 269.

2 “English Oxford Living Dictionaries Online,” Oxford, , accessed 01/01, 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/spirituality>.

3 Mois Benarroch, “2000 Years again and again and again,” in *Cool and Collected Poems* (Jerusalem: Moben publishing, 2006), 175.

4 Jeremy Rifkin, *The Zero Marginal Cost Society: The Internet of Things, the Collaborative Commons, and the Eclipse of Capitalism* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 298-303.

5 Ibid., 298-303

6 Ibid., 301

7 Here “Positivism” refers to the philosophical movement that started in the XIX c., but also to a more general approach of faith in the scientific progress

8 Miguel Benasayag and Gérard Schmit, *L'Epoca Delle Passioni Tristi* [Les passions tristes. Souffrance psychique et crise sociale (2003)], trans. Eleonora Missana (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2005), 18-20.

9 Ibid., 39-46

10 On the other hand Rifkin affirms that, through the deep economic changes undergoing, in the next future will happen than “Attachment to community and the search for transcendence and meaning comes to define the measure of one’s life rather than one’s material wealth”. Rifkin, *The Zero Marginal Cost Society: The Internet of Things, the Collaborative Commons, and the Eclipse of Capitalism*, 161

11 Benasayag and Schmit, *L'Epoca Delle Passioni Tristi*, 63-65

12 Pew Research Center, *The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050*, [2015]).

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Jürgen Habermas, “Religione Un Trionfo Controverso,” *La Repubblica* 12/09/2007, 2007.

16 Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane; the Nature of Religion* [Sacré

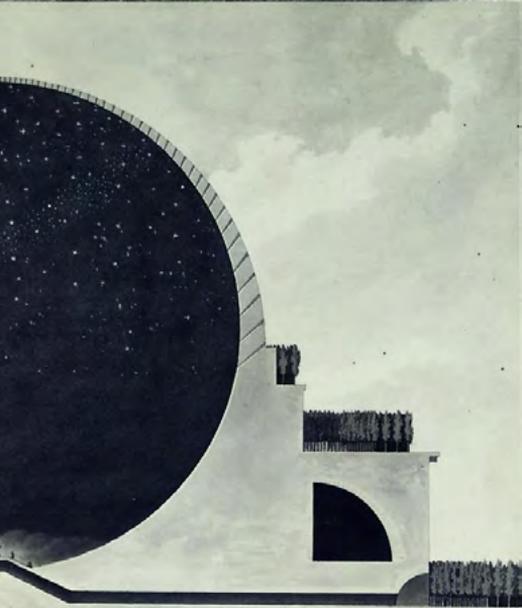
et le profane.], American ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 11-16.

17 All these architectural topics will be object of chapter 3, deepening their spatial characteristics

18 Very interesting prior event is the strong polemic in 1957 about the Ronchamp project of Le Corbusier, see chapter 3.B

19 Riccardo Bruscagli and Laura Andreini, "Sacred Space. Interview with Timothy Verdon," *Area*, 2016.

20 Interesting again the link that Benasayag and Schmit creates between the feeling of uncertainty and the possibility of developing society that feel free from any constrain or prohibition. Benasayag and Schmit, *L'Epoca Delle Passioni Tristi*, 127-129



CHAPTER 2

TOWARDS AN IDEA OF UNIVERSAL SPIRITUALITY

2.A _ AN OLD NEW THOUGHT

2.B _ SACRED

2.C _ BEAUTY, PROPORTIONS AND THE SPIRIT

2.A _ AN OLD NEW THOUGHT

“Pur tu, solinga, eterna peregrina,
Che sì pensosa sei, tu forse intendi,
Questo viver terreno,
Il patir nostro, il sospirar, che sia;
Che sia questo morir, questo supremo
Scolarar del sembiante,
E perir dalla terra, e venir meno
Ad ogni usata, amante compagnia.
E tu certo comprendi
Il perchè delle cose, e vedi il frutto
Del mattin, della sera,
Del tacito, infinito andar del tempo.”

Giacomo Leopardi¹

“Man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for happiness and for reason. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world. “

Albert Camus²

The need of religion and of the sacred can be seen as a human need that results from a feeling of fear, a consequence of an inconvenience, or as innate in the human experience. Discussing this topic deeply goes far beyond the aim of this work and would require extended philosophical research³. In architectural terms, both these theories could be valid and sufficient to think what could be the spatial characteristics that support and enhance this human tendency towards what we could define as Spirituality.

However, there is a field that belongs to the second theory mentioned, that seems particularly relevant for the aim of this research - the anthropology of religion. A specific research in the fields of philosophy or religion, but also of sociology and psychology, fields that include centuries of thinking on these topics, would move the direction of the research away⁴. The thoughts developed



05. Camunian civilization,
Sun worship: a praying man, his hands raised, beside a solar disk
 (reproduction of a cave inscription),
 Neolithic period.
 Valcamonica,
 Italy

by the anthropology of religion permit the achievement of an overview of the characteristic that the different religions, and before them, pre-historic cults and rituals, have in common. At the center of these thoughts stands the human being as a common denominator.

With a tendency towards universality, religious anthropology has its focus on the *homo religiosus*⁵, a man that is aware of his finite condition and is open towards the other and the transcendent (wholly other)⁶. The *homo religiosus* is constant throughout history as his behaviour has the same components: the feeling of loss before chaos, the will to give a sense to the things, and the fascination for the things that are able to reveal something beyond them, becoming symbols, referring to something unintelligible. He is a “man that tends towards a fullness of meaning, that transcends him”⁷. Ancestral examples that give the sense of this universality are the archetypical figures that express a religious feeling found in Neolithic rock paintings: in places very far one from the other, the same symbols have been found, such as drawings of the solar disk and of people in a praying attitude⁸.

In this context there is relevance to the work of the Belgian scholar and priest Julien Ries (1920-2013), that, moving from the works of Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) and Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), introduces the idea of an anthropology of the sacred. Sacredness that links to transcendence and mystery but also to a need of



06. Ron Amir,
Mosque (from
the exhibition
“Doing time in
Holot” in the Israel
Museum, Jerusalem),
2016

fullness of meaning, represented by Ries with the symbolic role of the light⁹.

According to Ries, throughout history and during the different periods of religions and cultures, the *homo religiosus* created his lexicon and language as a mental tool to discover and express the logic about the meaning of life. In this symbolic order of the universe the following have been fundamental: light, water, wind, tree, lightning, stars, mountain, sun, moon and above all the Vault of Heaven (sky) constitute a “heritage of the sacred” shared among the different religion throughout history¹⁰. Very interesting then is the fact that Ries, following Eliade’s ideas, assumes that the revelations of the sacred indicate to Man that the space in which he lives is not homogeneous, but needs a centre, a consecrated place (initially natural) to answer his need of sacred¹¹. At the same time the contemplation of the sky plays a similar role, expressing transcendence, strength, eternity, while in the everyday life the *homo religiosus* satisfies his need through the use of symbols, myths and rituals¹².

Symbols are for human beings at the base of creation and creativity, a means to access the subconscious and the way to create a link with the transcendent (symbolic role of mountains, sacred trees, water)¹³. Explaining the origins, when chaos became cosmos, myths link the man and his present time to the sacred time of the origin, creating also a system of symbols and giving to men models to follow and the possibility to achieve the experience of the sacred¹⁴. Rituals ensure the correspondence of the actions with the original archetypes and are at the base of the identification of sacred places. Through rituals, men seek a vital contact with transcendent reality, establishing ties with the deity, on a repetitive base that relates with the rhythms of nature and life. Within society, rituals represent coherence, “even if carried out in solitude, it relates to a community”¹⁵.

All these elements expressed have a great relevance and can find translation into architecture, in order to create a space that tries to link with an universal idea of spirituality, innate in human beings. As Ries suggests, an anthropology founded on the *homo religiosus* underlines the unity of the human species and its spirit¹⁶. After all, architectural images and metaphors are at the base of many philosophical and, furthermore, religious concepts¹⁷, proving the deep link existing between the inner dimension and the perception of the spatial elements that we experience.

2.B _ SACRED

“How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon? What did we do when we loosened this earth from its sun? Whither does it now move? Whither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash on unceasingly? Backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an above and below? Do we not stray, as through infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker? Shall we not have to light lanterns in the morning? [...] God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How shall we console ourselves, the most murderous of all murderers? [...] “What are these churches now, if they are not the tombs and monuments of God?”

Friedrich W. Nietzsche ¹⁸

The Sacred is the focal point of the thoughts of Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade. A focus on two specific works, Otto’s “The idea of the holy”¹⁹ and Eliade’s “The sacred and the profane”, appears very congruent with the aim of this research. Understanding what “sacred” means and the spatial definitions related to it can lead to a much broader viewpoint over the issues debated and providing very important concepts.

The attention of Eliade is more directly related with spatial concerns that reflect human conceptions of the reality and of the world. Otto’s text is more focused on the irrational sphere of the human experience, when dealing with the holy. However also in Otto, in which the cross references to art and architecture is observable in many paragraphs, is it possible to underline very important concepts about universal values related with spirituality, rich in potential for future developments in the spatial sphere.

THE IDEA OF THE HOLY (1917)

Rudolf Otto, as the same as Eliade will do, doesn’t assume that religion is something innate in human being, but that there is a natural inclination towards it. This inclination can develop into an awareness of something superior and transcendent if the experiences that the man has stimulate it: this attitude lies in



07. Caspar David
Friedrich,
*Abendlandschaft
mit zwei Männern
(Sonnenuntergang)*
(Sunset),
1830-35

the “Spirit”²⁰. Otto underlines then that the same situation occurs in the field of art²¹. For instance the category of the beauty shares with the sacred the condition of being not fully accessible for the rational comprehension²².

The work of Otto moves from the viewpoint that only the direct experience of the sacred is at the base of the religious feeling, and not any dogma or theory²³. It represents an attempt to give explanations to the irrational elements of the feeling that constitute the essence of any religion, including the more “rationalized”, such as the Christian ones²⁴, creating the foundations, as analysed by J.Ries, of a “psychology of the religious man”²⁵.

Otto develops the idea that moving from the *sacer* (sacred) and its manifestations and characteristics, the religious man can reach the “*numinous*” (the divine). The tight link between the sacred and the numinous is expressed by the author through few elements that deeply characterized it, meant as the base of any religious feeling. These represent a rational attempt to give the impression



08. *Santa Maria del Mar*, 14th-century. Barcelona

of the irrational, that, as Otto insists, can be fully expressed just by the experience.

The first element presented is the “creature-feeling” that brings the man to feel himself to be a creature strongly dependent on an overpowering superior entity. This can’t be expressed through words but just through the feeling that provokes it, being so different from any other feeling of dependence that Man can experience.

The following is the element of the *mysterium tremendum*, to which is strictly linked the one of the *majestas*. The *mysterium tremendum* is composed of two terms that indicate two specific characteristics of the numinous. The awfulness (*tremendum*) is the principal element of the primitive religions but keeps being present, in a diminished form, in every religion. It is the “awe”, completely far from any natural fear, that brought in the primitive religions to the idea of daemons and spirits and in the more structured ones to the idea of the God’s ire²⁶. The *mysterium* represents the feeling of complete inaccessibility, of mysterious not as something secret but as something unreachable, of the “wholly other” than oneself. Sometimes it can almost completely obscure the *tremendum*, becoming a feeling of complete astonishment²⁷. This kind of feeling of the “wholly other” is directed towards (or provoked by) natural mysterious object and phenomena, moving curiosity and fantasy, and it is fully represented by the “void” and the “nothing”²⁸. The awfulness and the “wholly other” are related then with the feeling of a “absolute overpoweringness” (*majestas*), the feeling of being so small



09. *Ming tombs*,
15th-17th-centuries.
Beijing area

as to be nothing, comparing to the great superior dimension. From this feeling derives the “religious humility”²⁹.

The last element proposed by Otto ³⁰ is the *fascinās* , the strong attraction and fascination towards the numinous. It appears as completely in contrast with the previous elements described, but it represents the positive term of the dual character of the numinous, and in both the experiences of the *fascinās* and of the *mysterium*, at their peak, there is an attention towards the “abnormal”, in deeply mystic raptures ³¹ .

The dual character of the numinous, leads Otto to propose an analogy with the aesthetic notion of the “sublime”. The latter is a concept that can’t be fully rationally unfolded and it is something that, reaching the spirit, repels and attracts at the same time³². This reveals that the notion of the “sublime”, showing a similar scheme to the one of the sacred, represents a strong connection between its rational and irrational elements. The “sublime”, in Otto’s words, is “well adapted to excite it [the numinous] and to be excited by it, while each tends to pass over into the other”³³.

As the numinous can’t be “taught”, “transmitted” but just “awakened” from the spirit³⁴, Otto outlines its means of expressions. The direct means are related with the sacred dimension, the indirect ones comes from similar feeling in the “natural” sphere³⁵. The indirect means are the “fearful” and the “horrible”, (analogous to the *tremendum*) the sublime (that replace the “horrible” at a higher

level), the “miraculous” (that is strictly related with the *mysterium*) and the “uncomprehended”³⁶ (able to stimulate the subconscious intuitions through what is unaccountable and suggestive)³⁷.

All these concepts expressed by Otto bring, more or less implicitly, important traces of possible developments in the field of art and, subsequently, also in architecture. In a short paragraph the author considers directly the “means by which the numinous is expressed in art”. The “sublime” takes place once more in the fields of arts and architecture, appearing in a primitive state in the megalithic age, evolving then in a mature state in Egyptian monuments. Next to it Otto suggests that a “downright magic impression” accompanies many buildings and decorations through symbols, especially in the ancient oriental art, deriving from Buddhism, while the perfect synthesis in the western art of the elements of the “sublime” and of the “magic” lies in the Gothic³⁸.

However these are indirect means of expressing the numinous in art: to find direct means it is necessary to consider the “darkness” and “silence”, to which eastern culture is able to add “emptiness” and “empty distances”³⁹. All these means are negative, the negation of something. The darkness furthermore is fully perceivable just when it is in contrast to a tiny brightness, as it is the semi-darkness to be mystical, which is associated with the sublime⁴⁰. Finally the emptiness is described as the sublime in horizontal, such is the immense desert, and it is used by traditional Chinese architecture and art⁴¹. This allows the achievement of a silent amplitude and majesty not through high halls and vertical lines but through enormous enclosed spaces and courtyards, able to include in their plan empty distances and the immense solitude of an entire landscape⁴².

THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE (1956)

Relating directly with the work of Otto, Mircea Eliade focuses his attention not on the relation between the rational and irrational elements of religion, but on the sacred and its opposite, the profane. These two terms are the base of the distinction between what Eliade calls the religious man (*homo religiosus*) and the nonreligious man, the latter fully developed in the modern western societies, but probably not completely absent even in archaic times⁴³.

The nonreligious man refuses a transcendent dimension and accepts the relativity of “reality”, developing a certain uneasiness before the manifestations of the sacred (called by Eliade by the term “hierophany”)⁴⁴. Such a man sees the sacred as the prime obstacle to his freedom⁴⁵. On the other hand for the religious man “all nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality”⁴⁶ and he tends to



10. *Temenos and threshold*, 2016

live as much as possible in the sacred because it means being close to the power and to the reality⁴⁷, in a relation that opens to him the cosmic dimension⁴⁸.

These are two completely different modes of being in the world, with different attitudes towards the experience of space, of time and towards nature and physiology. It is then very relevant to notice that Eliade asserts that a completely profane experience, even if closed to be reached in the western modernity, it is not completely possible, as even the most desacralised existence preserves traces of “religious” valorisation of the world. This happens because the “desacralisation” acts against the past, moving away precedent behaviour and concepts, adopting the opposite of them, but this behaviour remains emotionally present in his deepest



11. James Turrell,
Celestial Vault,
1996.
The Hague,
Netherlands

being⁴⁹. Penned in the subconscious, this traces leads to rituals (not specifically religious anymore) such as the festivities for the New Year, for a new house (a new life), to the form of the practices related with death, marriage and birth, even if secularised, and to the mythologies present in books and movies⁵⁰. In the profane subconscious, symbols have a key role as in the sacred, but differently from this, they are not able to fully awaken the individual consciousness and open it to the universal, the cosmic, remaining limited to specific and individual experience⁵¹. They are often related with psychological crisis, that they represent⁵².

Fundamental to this research are the assumptions that Eliade makes about the sacred space: “for the religious man, every existential decision to situate himself in space constitutes a religious decision” as this can mean living closer to a divine idea, related with the perfection of the beginning, or into the profane chaos, which leads him to the terror of nothingness, the nonbeing, where he can’t live⁵³. This need implies that the homogeneous space, undifferentiated and without direction, is not sacred, and that the sacred space is well defined and separated from the profane one⁵⁴.

Eliade develops this concept in the idea that religious man has the need to set himself in the “center of the world”, finding a fixed point that it is not the result of

an arbitrary human decision, but defined by symbolic mysterious signs⁵⁵. These signs constitute hierophanies, able to “found the world”, a world real, not relative, that becomes a cosmos, leaving out the chaos and the “foreign”⁵⁶. The “centre of the world” of the religious man is repeated on different scales, from the universe to the single dwelling, and spaces, that share the same characteristics⁵⁷. Eliade suggests that for the nonreligious man there are also privileged spaces, related to his personal life experience. These share similar characteristics with the sacred ones, becoming for the man “holy places” of his private universe, breaking the homogeneity of the space, in places that had revealed for him something other than ordinary daily life⁵⁸.

A sacred place is consecrated as a repetition of the cosmogony, repeating the paradigmatic work of the gods⁵⁹. The threshold is fundamental in the division of this space from the profane one, as it is the place in which the passage between these two worlds is possible⁶⁰. Similarly in the sacred space another “break in plane” is essential, a concept broadly used by Eliade, that permits the connection with the transcendent: the opening to the sky⁶¹. The possibility of communication with a transcendent dimension, taking place in the “centre of the world”, is based on three cosmic levels (earth, heaven, underworld) linked by what Eliade calls *axis mundi*⁶². This is the image of a universal pillar, a symbol from which are derived many forms, such as the one of the “sacred tree”⁶³, that becomes, following the author’s terminology, hierophanies⁶⁴.

The space of the profane existence is, in contrast, highly related with the functionalism, for which “you can change your “machine to live in” as often as you change your bicycle”⁶⁵. The nonreligious man can also easily change his position on the earth, breaking the strong meaning of the settlement (vital decision, for the religious man, for both the whole community and the individual), and the sacred aspect of the house as the reflection of the world, the creation of his own world⁶⁶. But, using the author’s words:

“the house is not an object, a “machine to live in”; it is the universe that man constructs for himself by imitating the paradigmatic creation of the gods, the cosmogony”⁶⁷

Traces of this attitude persist also in the profane existence, evident for instance in inauguration ceremonies.

The spatial characteristics expressed have in Eliade’s thought a very similar counterpart in the temporal sphere. The religious man refuses to live only in the historical present and through the threshold represented by the rites, he is able to pass from the ordinary “profane” time, to the sacred time, in which he links himself

again with the transcendent dimension related to the cosmogony, repeating the actions of the “beginning of time”⁶⁸. This temporal dimension is eternal because it is repetitive and circular, a “succession of eternities” that constitute a possibility of re-entering the time of creation, regenerating and making the profane time possible⁶⁹.

After dealing with spatial and temporal issues, Eliade considers the natural elements able to represent hierophanies. For the religious man, but somehow in a different way also for the profane⁷⁰, the supernatural is directly linked with the natural through many symbols⁷¹. Elements such as stones represent the “absolute existence, beyond time, invulnerable to becoming”⁷². The moon explains the cycle of life-death-new birth, the sun shows the possibility of persistence even if in motion, the intelligence symbolized by the light in contrast to the darkness⁷³. The mystery of life can be explained by the modes of being of the cosmos and vegetation, that renovate itself periodically, with rhythms that show order, harmony and permanence⁷⁴. Renovation is then closely linked with water, that represents the potential of life, meaning both death and re-birth, new creation through purification and regeneration⁷⁵.

The two central natural elements are finally the earth, that represents the origin and the birth⁷⁶, and, even more essential, the celestial vault, whose contemplation is alone able to provoke a religious experience, revealing the infinite distance and the transcendence of deity⁷⁷. The relation with the celestial vault is at the base of many rites (ascent, climbing) and myths (cosmic tree, cosmic mountain)⁷⁸. Eliade applies to the celestial vault some of the categories developed by Otto, writing that the sky represents the “wholly other”, infinite different than the “little” represented by Man and his environment, showing the *majestas* through its immensity and the *tremendum* through its storms⁷⁹.

Nature rhythms and sacred time show a repetition that is far from the profane concept of the “eternal return of the same”, developed since ancient times both in India and in Greece⁸⁰. This repetition is the advent of a positive new beginning through getting closer to the divine models, saving life from nothingness and death related to the precarious existence of the desacralized time⁸¹.

The sacred and the profane are two worlds, that are completely different, but a passage between them is possible, through thresholds represented by initiatory rituals, spatial conformations and symbols such as the difficulties of the passage through a “narrow gate” or a “bridge”⁸². Here many parallels can be found with the modern psychological analysis⁸³, but the sacred attitude is different because of dealing with a dimension that is “wholly other”.

A relevant critic to Eliade's work comes from the historian of religions Lindsay Jones, that points out how some concepts developed by Eliade, such as the one of "architecture as a microcosm" are presented as suitable for application to any sacred architecture, while they derive just from few cultural examples⁸⁴. On the other hand Jones assumes that many principles are useful if used in a heuristic approach, as mid-steps of the research, not assuming that "Eliade's model of sacred space explains more then it actually does"⁸⁵. Eliade's principles are valid especially in the perceptive implications that they show on the experience of the sacred space: a concept such as the one of "hierophany" shows how the idea of sacred presence, no matter if it is really a "found" sign, or artificially created, deeply influences the point of view of the users of the space⁸⁶.

2.C _ BEAUTY, PROPORTIONS AND THE SPIRIT

“Forse ad aggiustare le sorti del mondo non basta la bellezza. Tuttavia essa vi contribuisce parecchio”

Giancarlo Onorato⁸⁷

There is still a philosophical concept that I believe should be analysed before moving to consider directly space and architecture: the role that beauty plays in relation to spirituality.

I don't intend to enter deeply in a philosophical field on one of the most difficult topics ever, as lacking the skills to do so and it does not represent the aim of this work. But a short dissertation on the topic, can help us to move towards architecture and the core of this research.

More than trying to give an answer to the question of what “beauty” means, it is important to understand if and how beauty and spirituality are linked, and how architecture plays a role in it. Once more the words of Rudolf Otto, in his “The Idea of Holy”, are very interesting in linking these three terms:

“Let us consider the deepest and most fundamental element in all strong and sincerely felt religious emotion. Faith unto salvation, trust, love, all these are there. But over and above there is an element which may also on occasion, quite apart from them, profoundly affect us and occupy the mind with a welling bewildering strength. Let us follow it [...] in the atmosphere that clings to old religious monuments and buildings, to temples and to churches [...] it may be developed into something beautiful and pure and glorious.”⁸⁸

Otto suggests that there is something that surrounds monuments and religious architectures that is able to become the “beauty”, the “pure”, the “glory”⁸⁹ and that this can be assimilated to the deepest of any religious feeling. This seems to lead to an universal idea of beauty, and to the fact that it can be expressed through architecture (actually architecture gets a very important role in this, in Otto's thought). We can assume that the objects to which the adjective “beauty” has been applied throughout history, have changed character and shape, but the idea of “beauty” has probably remained constant⁹⁰.

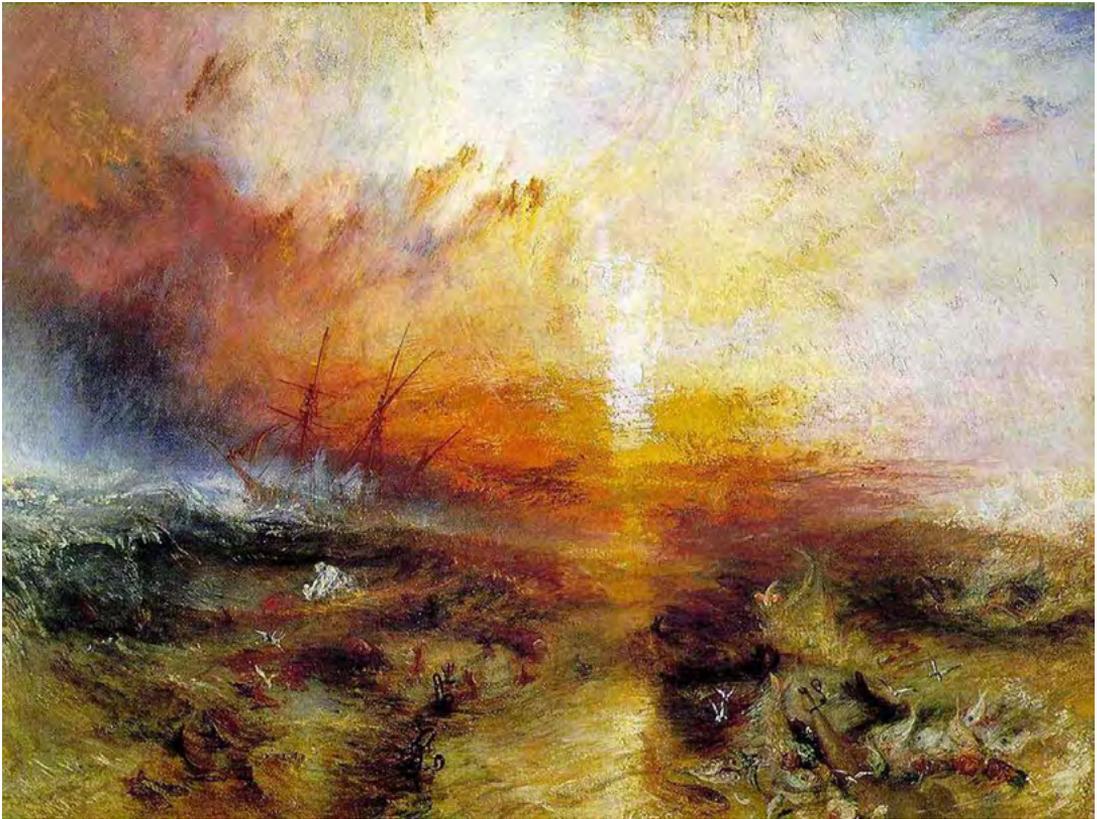
Following then, the thought of the philosopher Roger Scruton, we find a paradox in the idea that beauty is something objective, a property of the object



12. Francesco Guardi,
Paesaggio,
1750

itself, but that at the same time it requires a direct experience of the individual⁹¹, with the possibility of judgement: to be revealed it requires an “act of attention”⁹². As Kant suggested, the description of an object as “beautiful” is a quality of the object not of the feeling towards it, but it requires an aesthetic judgement, that is universal but “subjective” as strictly related with the direct experience⁹³. At the same time Scruton points out a very interesting concept, in the fact that beauty often stays in the ordinary when it is orderly and harmonious, but that also exists a supreme aesthetic value, for which the term “beauty” is properly reserved. This is not an everyday experience and has an affinity with religious feeling and the “sacred”, that always represents something untouchable for the most, something that requires at least rites of initiation⁹⁴.

To be revealed, beauty requires us to devote all our interest to the object, autonomously from the possible use of it, despite its function. It is “disinterested interests”, or a “purposiveness without purpose”, using Kant’s words⁹⁵, in which the function is a part of the judgement of beauty⁹⁶ but, when it comes to the aesthetic value, it is not independent, it is part of this goal (“the function follows the form”, relevant concept thinking in architectural terms)⁹⁷. In a similar direction Umberto Eco, carrying on a thought that Kant had already developed⁹⁸, suggests that we define “beauty” as something that we like to contemplate but towards which we have no direct desire, with a “distant” attitude⁹⁹. On the other hand the feeling of the “sublime”, already mentioned about Rudolf Otto’s work,



13. J.M. William
Turner,
The Slave Ship,
1840

where he puts it in direct contact with the numinous¹⁰⁰, is strictly related with the feeling of the “beauty” from many philosophers of the 17th-century¹⁰¹. Edmund Burke, in his work “A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful” (1757), describes the “sublime” in relation with feelings of dread, ideas of power, of a dimension far larger than the human one, of solitude. Burke adds that the main characteristic for which the “sublime” takes place is that these feelings should not be really dangerous, not related with a natural fear, experienced through a certain distance from the object provoking fear¹⁰². The “sublime” originates in fear, while the “beauty” from love, but both share the need of disinterested contemplation and both are able to lift out of the ordinary life, out of the “practical”¹⁰³.

Act of attention and practical disinterest permits a link to be made with the reflection of Max Scheler in his essay *Liebe und Erkenntnis* (Love and knowledge, 1915)¹⁰⁴, where he supports the idea that there is a very strong tie between love and any possible knowledge. Scheler points out, through his analysis of the very core of the Christian philosophical message, that at the base of any form of knowledge there is an act of love (or hate), able to move an object out of the

shadow of the “ordinary”. Avoiding entering deeply into these concepts, we can just end noticing that in Greek philosophy and in particular in Plato, the higher level of love, the Eros, is a movement of ascension, out of the sensory attachment, towards a notion of contemplation of objects, not possession or “use” of them, in the realm of the “forms”¹⁰⁵.

Two concepts of beauty have been pointed out in these few lines, one linked with an idea of rational order and one that leads to an idea of inaccessibility, of an ultimate perfect state. Both these concepts are related with divine conceptions, when elevated to their higher level. The first one recalls the idea of cosmic harmony, that can date back at least to Pythagorean philosophy, based on numbers and proportion, and then its further develop in the idea of God as the creator of the World, according to a principle of order and measure¹⁰⁶. This concept is common to the three main monotheistic religions and found expression, for instance, in Christianity in the Middle Age through the image of God as the “architect of the world”¹⁰⁷. The second concept proposed leads back to the vision of the essence of the religious feeling in the Otto’s concept of the *mysterium tremendum*. Once more both of them enforce the idea that the ultimate level of the aesthetic conception has to do with the extra-ordinary, the not fully achievable. As Eliade wrote:

“Even for the most sophisticated men of letters, “esthetic contemplation” still retains an aura of religious prestige”¹⁰⁸

At the same time we continuously find a reflection of this high ideas into our common experience. Is again Otto telling that the “beauty” and the “horrible” are prior categories that our experience can’t explain but can recognize ¹⁰⁹, concluding that:

“To know and to understand conceptually are two different things”

The link between “beauty” and spiritual need finds a very direct formulation in the “Letter to Artists”, that Pope John Paul II wrote in 1999. From the first words, the letter deals with the idea of “beauty” in relation to the act of creation and its spiritual and religious value. In the expression and partial interpretation of the mystery, is the “beauty” felt in the creation, more then the object resulting, that is able to penetrate deeper¹¹⁰. Poets, writers, sculptors, architects, musicians and actors, through their creations, have been able, according to the Pope’s words, to make that:

“The “beautiful” was thus wedded to the “true”, so that through art too souls might be

lifted up from the world of the senses to the eternal”¹¹¹.

The letter is an invitation to the artist to continue to deal with “beauty” to make people experience wonder towards the universe and deriving from “beauty” the enthusiasm necessary to deal with the crucial challenges of life, which stand before them, re-evoking the words of the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65, that stated:

“This world in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair. Beauty, like truth, brings joy to the human heart and is that precious fruit which resists the erosion of time, which unites generations and enables them to be one in admiration.”¹¹²

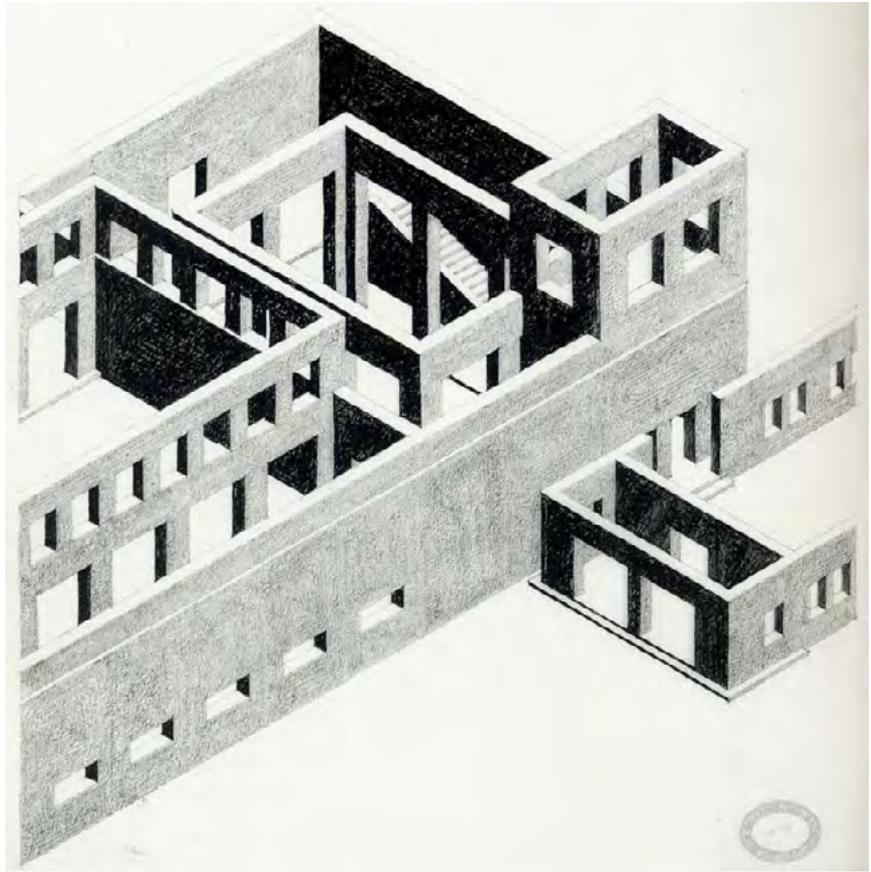
At this point it is very interesting to notice that the Benedictine monk and architect Dom Hans van der Laan, while developing his theory of proportion, in order to give sense to an idea of “order”, never uses the word “beauty”¹¹³. His idea of “order”, his point of view about the fact that architecture interrupts the homogeneous nature, creating an inside and an outside¹¹⁴, and his inclination towards “universal” ideas, recall concepts already analysed, such as the ones of “sacred”¹¹⁵. All his thought is deeply characterized by an idea of a spiritual value of architecture¹¹⁶.

On the other hand proportions have been, throughout history, directly connected with an idea of “beauty”, starting from Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy, through the classical Vitruvian architecture, through all the Renaissance and later¹¹⁷. But, as the same Scruton points out, in many cases the beauty of a work of art or architecture stands beyond rules or even derives from their transgression, out of application of scale rules and proportions¹¹⁸. Rules alone are not able to explain the feeling of perfection or beauty and Scruton cites Michelangelo’s Laurentian Library above all¹¹⁹.

It is thus important to notice that the system of proportions developed by Dom Hans van der Laan, the “Plastic Number”, is not based on external scales, modules and proportional layouts, differently from many examples through history, which one of the more recent is the Modulor developed by Le Corbusier. The “Plastic number” is based on the relationships between the parts, though the ratio between their measures, a system that is completely inner the single architecture and not related with external reference units¹²⁰. He develops thus the concept of “expressiveness of the architectural space”¹²¹, with a system that can find some parallels in the Polykleitos’s Canon, where a sculpture started to have a system of proportion that is based on the relationship between its parts, their position and the viewpoint, rather than their sticking to an abstract module¹²².

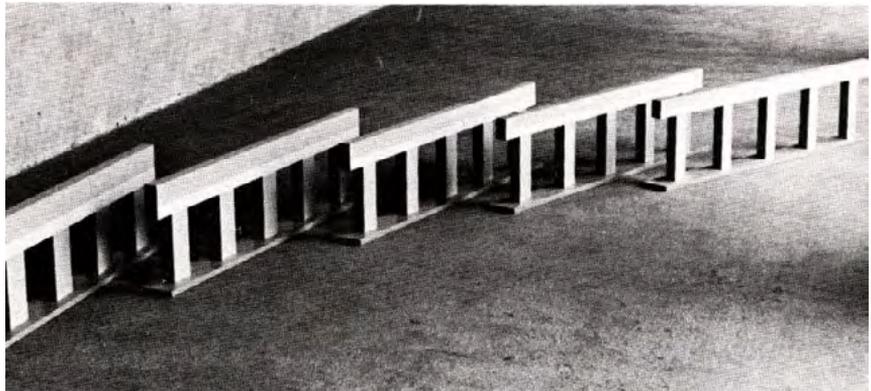
14. *God as Architect*
(*The Frontispiece of*
Bible Moralisee),
c. 1220-30





15. Dom Hans van der Laan, *Drawings for the St. Benedictusberg Abbey*

16. Dom Hans van der Laan, *Models to study the Plastic Number*



At the base of van der Laan's theory lies the idea that spaces, and their forms, suggest to the human body the way they are meant to be inhabited, through the body position (standing, sitting, laying) and movement (straight, circular, on a mixed line), where the movement represents the introduction of the temporal dimension in the space¹²³.



17. Dom Hans
van der Laan,
St. Benedictusberg
Abbey,
1968.
Vaals,
Netherlands

If Dom Hans van der Laan doesn't use the word "beauty", we can dare that is why he refers to an highest concept of "beauty", that, like the "numinous" of Otto, is not fully achievable, at least for the rationality. For him, architecture is the adaptation of the immeasurable immensity of nature to the human limitation, to enable Man to understand the measure and the expressiveness of the space, through a direct experience¹²⁴.

Beauty shares therefore many characteristics with the spiritual realm and raises from ordinary and "imperfect" life towards the highest unity with the transcendental, telling us at the same time that, quoting Scruton, "we are at home in the world, the world is already ordered in our perceptions¹²⁵ as a place fit for the lives of beings like us"¹²⁶.

Beauty finally is something disinterested, far from any direct objective and function, out of the ordinary, sharing these characteristic with love¹²⁷ and spirituality. Evoking Scheler, we can think that just in this way, through an act of attention and practical disinterest, a movement towards a higher level of things, that may be knowledge, spirituality or other, can be achieved. Furthermore, we can definitely assume that this movement can only take place in our experience of the world, even if the sensory experience involves just a partial form of the high concepts of "beauty" and "spirit". At the same time this partial form, that involves a subjective experience, is necessary, if not fundamental, to give shape to these universal concepts and mark the first step towards them. In these experiences, the space in which we act plays a key role. Its order and proportion are fundamental to permit the "understanding" of it and, somehow, to create a link with a higher order of things, to which human beings have always tended.

NOTES CHAPTER 2

- 1 But you, lonely, restless and thinking wanderer,
You may conceive earthly life,
Our griefs, our sighs, whatever;
Whatever death means, this eventual
fading of our features,
And quitting the world and every accustomed,
beloved acquaintance.
I'm sure you understand
The why of things, and you can see the yield
Of morning, of evening,
The quiet, endless flow of time.”

“Canto notturno di un pastore errante dell'Asia” in Giacomo Leopardi, *Canti Di Giacomo Leopardi* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1892), 102-108.

2 Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* [Mythe de Sisyphe.], trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 21.

3 Interesting on this topic the short essay Silvano Petrosino, "Religiosità, Religione e Struttura Dell'Umano," in *L'Antropologia Religiosa Di Fronte Alle Espressioni Della Cultura e Dell'Arte: Il Contributo Di Julien Ries Alla Storia Delle Religioni Atti Del Colloquio Internazionale, Università Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore, Milano, 19 Febbraio 2008 R. Boyer ... [Et Al.]*, ed. Natale Spineto (Milano: Jaca book, 2009), 176.

4 For different definitions of the term “religion”, from different disciplinary points of view, see Jack David Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion : Culture to the Ultimate* (New York ; London: Routledge, 2007), 6-7.

5 “Religious man” is a term that, starting from Mircea Eliade, undergoes many anthropological thoughts

6 Maria Vittoria Cerutti, "Storia Delle Religioni e Antropologia Religiosa," in *L'Antropologia Religiosa Di Fronte Alle Espressioni Della Cultura e Dell'Arte: Il Contributo Di Julien Ries Alla Storia Delle Religioni Atti Del Colloquio Internazionale, Università Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore, Milano, 19 Febbraio 2008 R. Boyer ... [Et Al.]*, ed. Natale Spineto (Milano: Jaca book, 2009), 120-123.

7 Natale Spineto, "Julien Ries e La Fondazione Di Un'Antropologia Del

Sacro," in *L'Antropologia Religiosa Di Fronte Alle Espressioni Della Cultura e Dell'Arte: Il Contributo Di Julien Ries Alla Storia Delle Religioni Atti Del Colloquio Internazionale, Università Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore, Milano, 19 Febbraio 2008 R. Boyer ... [Et Al.]*, ed. Natale Spineto (Milano: Jaca book, 2009), 95-98.

8 Fiorenzo Facchini, "Il Senso Religioso Nell'Uomo Preistorico," in *L'Antropologia Religiosa Di Fronte Alle Espressioni Della Cultura e Dell'Arte: Il Contributo Di Julien Ries Alla Storia Delle Religioni Atti Del Colloquio Internazionale, Università Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore, Milano, 19 Febbraio 2008 R. Boyer ... [Et Al.]*, ed. Natale Spineto (Milano: Jaca book, 2009), 176.

9 Spineto, *Julien Ries e La Fondazione Di Un'Antropologia Del Sacro* , 92-93

10 Julien Ries, "Una Nuova Antropologia Religiosa Fondamentale," in *L'Antropologia Religiosa Di Fronte Alle Espressioni Della Cultura e Dell'Arte: Il Contributo Di Julien Ries Alla Storia Delle Religioni Atti Del Colloquio Internazionale, Università Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore, Milano, 19 Febbraio 2008 R. Boyer ... [Et Al.]* , ed. Natale Spineto (Milano: Jaca book, 2009), 25.

11 Ibid., 26

12 Ibid., 26-29

13 Julien Ries, *The Origins of Religions* [Les origines des religions.] (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1994), 119-122.

14 Ibid., 123-126

15 Ibid., 127-131

16 Ries, *Una Nuova Antropologia Religiosa Fondamentale* , 33

17 Some images are the description of Jesus as "the door" towards salvation, of the apostles as "the pillars" of the Church, the Jewish "tent of the presence" or the description of the Muslim mystic al-Ghazālī of the heart having "two gates", one opening outward, which is that of the senses and one opening inward toward the divine world Lindsay Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison* (Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 2000), 113-115 vol. 1.

18 Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom*, ed. Oscar Levy, 2nd

- 65 Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane; the Nature of Religion* , 50
- 66 Ibid., 51-53, 56
- 67 Ibid., 56
- 68 Ibid., 68-72, 81
- 69 Ibid., 88-89
- 70 “No modern man, however irreligious, is entirely insensible to the charms of nature” and “esthetic contemplation still retains an aura of religious prestige” Ibid., 151
- 71 Ibid., 116-118
- 72 Ibid., 155-156
- 73 Ibid., 156-159
- 74 Ibid., 117, 148-150
- 75 Ibid., 130-132
- 76 Eliade points out that also the profanes preserve a mystical solidarity with their native soil and the feeling of “belonging to a place” Ibid., 138-141
- 77 Ibid., 117-121, 128-129
- 78 Ibid., 117-121, 128-129
- 79 Ibid., 118-121
- 80 Ibid., 107-113
- 81 Ibid., 90-96
- 82 Ibid., 179-184
- 83 Ibid., 208-209
- 84 Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison* , 35-37 vol.2
- 85 Ibid., 44 vol. 2
- 86 Ibid., 37-39, 45-46
- 87 “Maybe to fix the fate of the world is not enough just the beauty. However it does so quite (it goes a long way?)” Giancarlo Onorato, *Ex Semi Di Musica Vivifica* (Milano: Vololibero, 2013), 314.
- 88 Otto, *The Idea of the Holy : An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, 12-13
- 89 In the Italian translation these terms are directly used Otto, *Il Sacro*, 27
- 90 Umberto Eco, *Storia Della Bellezza* (Milano: Bompiani, 2004), 12-14.
- 91 This concept reminds again the ideas of Otto on the numinuos, expressed in the chapter 2.B
- 92 Roger Scruton, *Beauty : A very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5-11 and 44.
- 93 Ibid., 26-27

ed., Vol. 10 (Edinburgh, London: Foulis, 1910), 167-169.

19 The original title of the book is *Das Heilige*, that means “The Sacred”, as maintained in other translations of this work, such as the Italian one

20 Rudolf Otto, *Il Sacro*, ed. Ernesto Buonaiuti, trans. Ernesto Buonaiuti (Milano: SE, 2009), 181-182.

21 Ibid., 182

22 Ibid., 20

23 Ibid., 20-22, 177

24 This is clear since the subheading of the book, “An Inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational”. The references to Christianity as a religion that moved much farther from the primitive appearances of the sacred, full of rational translations of them is widespread along Otto's work.

25 Ries, *Una Nuova Antropologia Religiosa Fondamentale*, 20

26 Otto, *Il Sacro*, 28-33

27 Ibid., 39-41

28 Ibid., 42-44

29 Ibid., 34-38

30 Here are presented just the four main elements that constitute the main structure of Otto's thought, as also J.Ries propose in Ries, *Una Nuova Antropologia Religiosa Fondamentale*, 176 omitting the elements of the *augustum*, the *energicum* and the *portentum*

31 Otto, *Il Sacro*, 39-41

32 Ibid., 62-63

33 Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy : An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational* (OUP, 1958), 42.

34 Otto, *Il Sacro*, 80

35 Ibid., 80-81

36 The uncomprehended is different from the deeper *mysterium*, that refers to what is completely inaccessible

37 Ibid., 82-84

38 Ibid., 85-87

39 Ibid., 87-90

40 Ibid., 88-89

41 Otto brings examples such as the imperial tombs of the Ming emperors at Nanjing and Beijing

42 Ibid., 89

43 Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane; the Nature of Religion* [Sacré

et le profane.], American ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 203.

44 Ibid., 11

45 Ibid., 203

46 Ibid., 12

47 Along all the book Eliade supports the idea that “The sacred is saturated with being” as it is not vulnerable to the relativity of the subjective (and misleading) experience Ibid.

48 It is interesting to noticed that the already mentioned work of Jeremy Rifkin (chapter 1.B), starting from a very different perspective, economic and sociological, arrives to suggest the idea that in the next future men will develop a “biosphere consciousness”, feeling linked with the entire earth and universe and all human kind Jeremy Rifkin, *The Zero Marginal Cost Society: The Internet of Things, the Collaborative Commons, and the Eclipse of Capitalism* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 297-303.

49 Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane; the Nature of Religion* , 204

50 Ibid., 186,205

51 Ibid., 211-212

52 Ibid., 211-212

53 The relation between chaos and death is still very strong in the contemporary language, even when immersed in a deeply profane existence Ibid., 34, 49, 64-65

54 Ibid., 211-212

55 Ibid., 21-29

56 Ibid., 21-29

57 Ibid., 43

58 Ibid., 24

59 Ibid., 32

60 Ibid., 25

61 Ibid., 26, 43

62 *Ibid.*, 35-37

63 Ibid., 35-37

64 Eliade brings examples of the application of this symbols, such as in the Native Americans sacred spaces, were the roof represents the sky, the floor the earth, the four walls, doors, windows and colours represent the four directions of the cosmic space Ibid., 46, other examples are provided by Lindsay Jones, that uses the word “cosmogrammatic” to describe their language, in Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison*, 39-41 (vol 2)

- 94 Ibid., 12-14
- 95 Ibid., 65
- 96 This re-calls the ideas of Thomas Aquinas that considered fundamental the adjustment of the matter to the shape and to the aim to consider something as “beautiful” Eco, *Storia Della Bellezza*, 88
- 97 Scruton, *Beauty : A very Short Introduction*, 14-18
- 98 Eco, *Storia Della Bellezza*, 294
- 99 Ibid., 8-10
- 100 See chapter 2.B
- 101 The role played from the individual is then central in the idea of the “sublime” and affected subsequently also the idea of “beauty” starting from the thoughts of this time Ibid., 275-277
- 102 Ibid., 290-293
- 103 Scruton, *Beauty : A very Short Introduction*, 61-63
- 104 Scheler Max and Simonotti Edoardo, *Amore e Conoscenza Max Scheler* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2009), 109.
- 105 Scruton, *Beauty : A very Short Introduction*, 34-35 Similar ideas are expressed I by Scheler, but he ends then to affirm that in the Greek philosophy love is the result of knowledge, achieved through an individual process, very different from the Christian idea of love that he depicts Scheler and Simonotti, *Amore e Conoscenza Max Scheler*, 38-40
- 106 Eco, *Storia Della Bellezza*, 82-85
- 107 A graphical expression of it is the miniature from the moralized Bible of the Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek, folio I verso, Paris c. 1220–1230
- 108 Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane; the Nature of Religion*, 152
- 109 Otto, *The Idea of the Holy : An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational* , 134-135
- 110 Pope John Paul II, Letter of his holiness Pope John Paul II to artists , 04/04/1999, 1999.
- 111 Ibid.
- 112 Ibid.
- 113 Tiziana Proietti, *Ordine e Proporzione Dom Hans Van Der Laan e l'Espressività Dello Spazio Architettonico* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2015), 1o.
- 114 Ibid., 16
- 115 In particular the thoughts of Eliade expressed in chapter 2.B
- 116 Ibid., 21
- 117 Eco, *Storia Della Bellezza* , 61-69-293
- 118 What seems relevant are the real proportions of the space, not the

theoretical will of application of schemes, modules, that not in all the cases corresponds then to the actual building's proportions

119 Scruton, *Beauty : A very Short Introduction* , 120-122

120 Proietti, *Ordine e Proporzione Dom Hans Van Der Laan e l'Espressività Dello Spazio Architettonico* , 19

121 Ibid., 9-10

122 Interesting to notice that Eco, writing about Polykleitos's Canon, relates it with the platonic concept of "eurhythmics ", that Vitruvius consider different from the "symmetry" the former base of the idea of proportion. Eurhythmics is a term largely used by Hans van der Laan in the development of his theory of the Plastic Number. Eco, *Storia Della Bellezza*, 74-75; Proietti, *Ordine e Proporzione Dom Hans Van Der Laan e l'Espressività Dello Spazio Architettonico*, 21-22

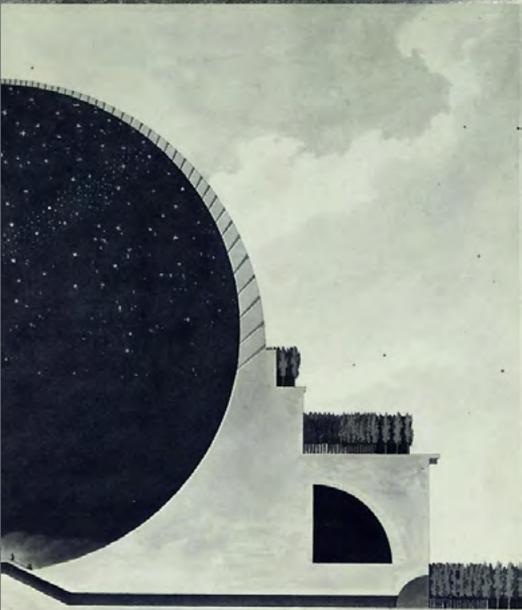
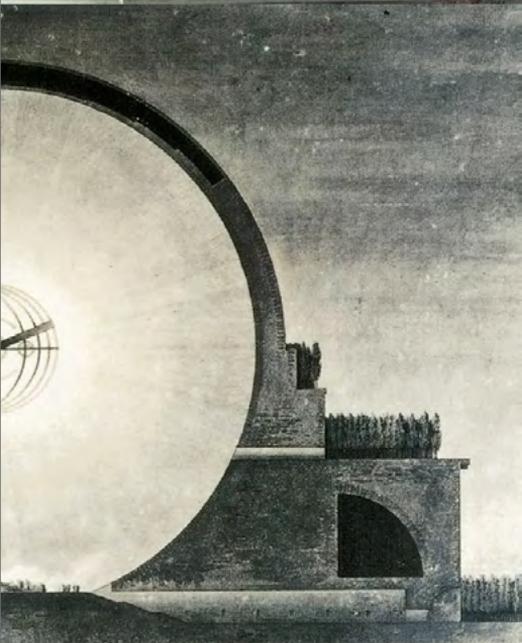
123 Ibid., 17

124 Ibid., 8, 15, 35-36, 40-42, 53 Fundamental for the development of this theory are perceptive experiment, that, on the other hand, aim to discover universal principles. One of this is described in Ibid., 47-50

125 Interesting that also this definition is based on the world "perception"

126 Scruton, *Beauty : A very Short Introduction*, 145-146

127 Ibid., 148



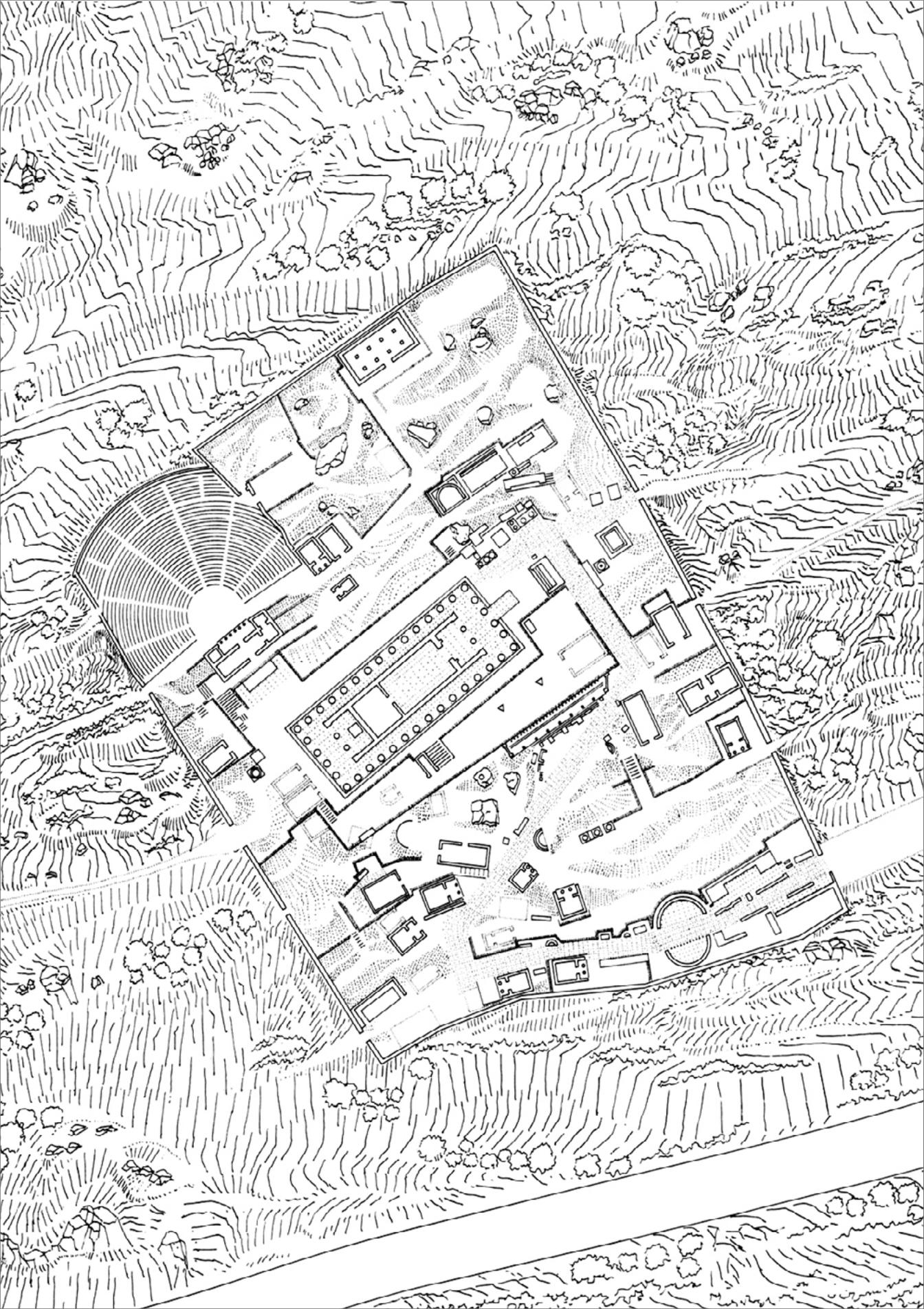
CHAPTER 3

SEEKING THE SPACE OF THE SPIRIT

3.A _ AN ANCESTRAL IDEA OF SPACE

3.B _ ARCHITECTURE FOR THE SPIRIT

3.C _ THE SPACE OF THE NEO-MYSTIC ART



3.A _ AN ANCESTRAL IDEA OF SPACE

“Stone is more stony than before. In general we no longer understand architecture, at least not nearly as well we understand music. We have outgrown the symbolism of lines and figures, just as we have lost the habit of recognizing the effects of rhetorical tone and no longer suck this sort of cultural mother’s milk from the first moment of our life. Everything in a Greek or Christian building originally signified something, and indeed, did so by reference to a higher order of things: this atmosphere of inexhaustible significance lay upon the building like a magic veil. Beauty came only incidentally into the system, without essentially affecting the fundamental sensation of the uncanny sublime, of things consecrated by proximity to the gods and to magic; at most, beauty mitigated the dread—but this dread was everywhere the presupposition. What is the beauty of a building to us now? The same thing as the beautiful face of a woman without spirit: something masklike.”

Friedrich W. Nietzsche¹

Spiritual spaces and before them spiritual rituals have accompanied human beings probably since pre-historical times, as discussed in the previous chapters and as can be suggested by the habits of primitive tribes. Before any construction by humans, the value of natural elements, such as caves, group of stones, the ground itself, has been the central elements of interaction for human beings, in the rituals that represent primitive religions².

The natural environment has played a fundamental role in the definition of the “sacred” for a long time. In ancient Greek culture, sacred trees were worshiped for their symbolic value in relation to the mythological stories that linked them with a specific deity³.

Architecture started, step by step, to enter within the natural environment, recreating and replacing the complex system of meanings that accompanied the rituals and giving shape to the feeling of the “Sacred”.

For a long time the role played by the nature remained central. Many rural Greek shrines didn’t have monumental architecture⁴ and the green landscape around the sanctuaries was fundamental in creating the sacred environment. Cultivated and wild elements were mixed in the *temenos* (the holy ground belonging to the sanctuary) to recall a divine presence, since the gods themselves partook of both cultivated and wild⁵. The definition of a holy space around the temple, able to separate the sacred from the profane is something shared by many other ancient civilizations, such as the Babylonian, Assyrian and Semites⁶.

18. *Sanctuary of Apollo (site plan), 7th-3rd-century B.C. Delphi, Greece*

The landscape played also a key role in the setting of the temples and their orientation. While in the cities the criteria applied were more functionalist, in rural areas the presence of a cave, a spring or a particular rock formation constituted a good reason to place the sanctuary next to it, exploiting its “inherent sacredness”⁷. The orientation was in many cases affected by landscape elements next to it⁸. Affinities are present in the ancient Semitic cultures, where the setting of sanctuaries, when not directly linked with a divine manifestation, was related with the presence of elements that are ascribed to the power of a god, such as a spring or a sacred tree (even if it is questionable if they were worshiped or not, their religious character is proven), or to heights, which were considered a dwelling-place of the gods themselves⁹.

In Greek culture, therefore, not only was the position of the temple fundamental, but also the way to approach it. Often temples were placed high on hills and the view to them appeared and vanished on the way, finally approaching it on a three/quarter view, able to reveal the three-dimensionality of the building¹⁰. The preparation to appreciate the Sacred setting occurred by a procession (that could stretch up to fourteen kilometres), ritual baths, purification from specific springs, reading inscriptions, admiring statues, and choral music¹¹.

A very interesting concept to explore, in order to get deeper in this research of an ancestral idea of space, lies in the word “taboo”, or even better the latin word

19. *Sanctuary of Apollo,*
Delphi,
Greece





20. Bartolomeo Pinelli, *Romolo con l'aratro traccia le mura di Roma (Romolo traces the pomerium)*, 1818

sacer, that paradoxically mean both holy and unholy.¹² The plural of *sacer*, *sacra*, is a word for sacrifices and religious rites and in the idea of sacrifice there are both the holy and evil components. An animal that has been killed, but that in this way becomes worthy of the gods.

In the architectural field this concept links to the theories that see the origin of the Greek temple as a reconstruction of the elements proper of the sacrifice rituals¹³, but also to the Roman rituals of foundation of city or even buildings, that had a religious meaning related to sacrifice. Walter Burkert, studying the meaning and values of the ancient Greek sacrificial rituals, stated that “A house, a bridge or a dam will stay strong only if something lies slaughtered beneath it”¹⁴.

Not just in the Greek world, but also in the Latin one, sacrifices used to mark a new beginning, fostering again the coexistence of death and birth, holy and unholy¹⁵.

In sacrificial rituals we can also find the idea of boundary, between the inside and the outside of a certain space. In the ancient rituals there is a precedent, before the architectural form, in the circle of participants at the sacrifice, that

was segregated from the outside world, with a complicated and well defined social structures with specific roles.¹⁶ A similar custom was used in the first Semitic cults, that used to mark with a line of stone the sacred space for a public worship, when it was conducted in the open air outside the cities, as in the desert¹⁷.

The Greek temple, often built on a hill, where the worshipers used to gather together, introduces the colonnade to mark the difference between the "public" area, where rituals took place and the interior, where the *cella* contained the statue of the god and access was restricted to the priests.

The column itself was in the past used to mark out properties and jurisdictions¹⁸, while the Roman *pomerium* sets the limit of the city and was traced after a series of rituals, being then marked by a line of stone pillars (*cippi pomerii*)¹⁹. The sacred value of the *pomerium* is then linked again with the sacrifice in the myth of the foundation of Rome, where Romulus kills Remus that passed the sacred limit but his death is described as the result of a verdict and rules, not an individual human decision²⁰. As well as in ancient Greek culture, trophies were erected on the spot where a soldier put his enemy to death, as part of the worship of gods²¹.

A boundary between what is allowed and what not, on the thin line of the *sacer*, between holy and unholy, represents the idea of a threshold, that can either be passed just on specific conditions or never, in both cases creating the feeling of awe and mystery.

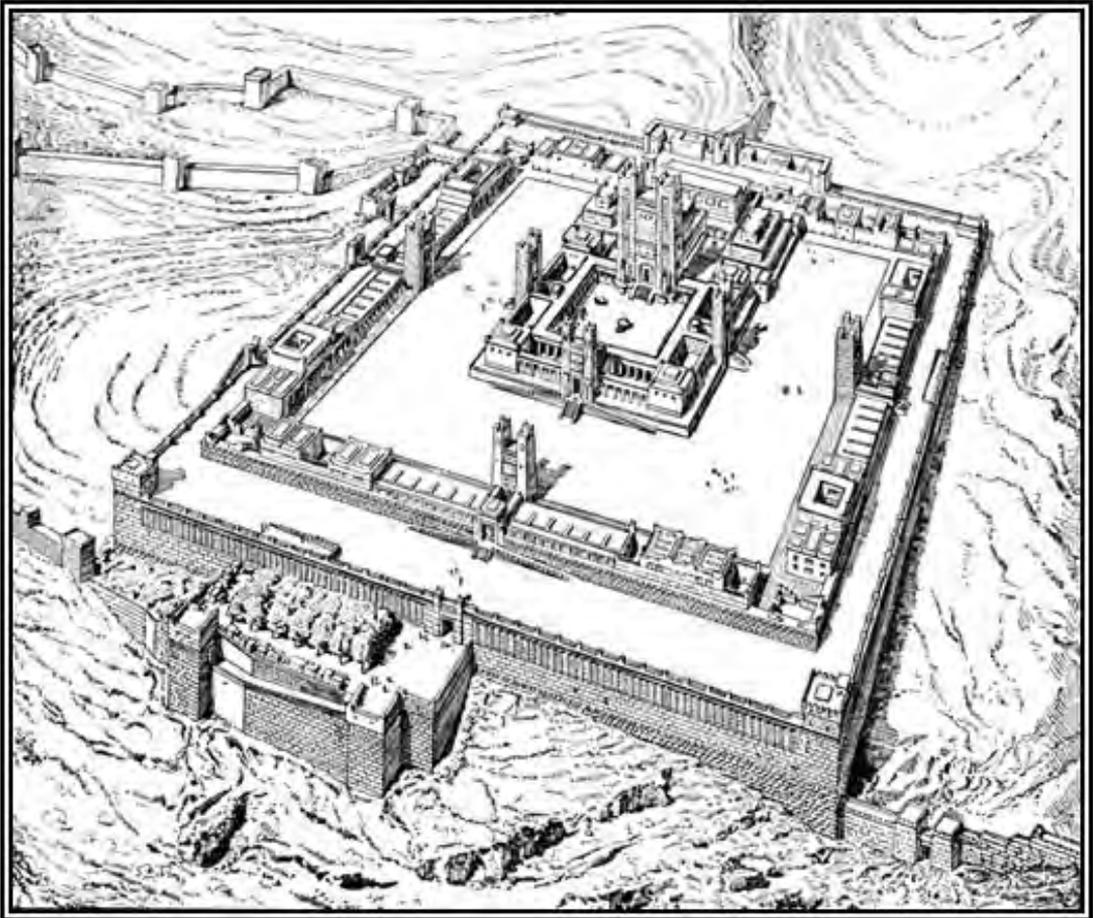
We can find here again a parallel with Otto's concept of the *mysterium tremendum*²², a feeling that has nothing to do with the natural fear, a feeling of the absolute inaccessibility able to generate anxiety (canny), a feeling that in many religions has been expressed by God's ire²³. At the same time it represent something hidden that arouses bewilderment and concern because it goes beyond the understandable, but on the other hand generates curiosity.

In many faiths the idea of the inaccessible is present, expressed also in spatial-architectural form, where the role of the threshold is again central.

It seems relevant at this point to analyse a group of three ancient architectures, developed by different cultures and faiths, focusing on the spatial characteristics in relationship to the idea of "Sacred" expressed thus far.

SOLOMON'S AND HEROD'S TEMPLES

The information about Solomon's Temple (First Temple) has come solely from the Hebrew Bible and some historians are also raising doubts about the actual existence of the building. According to the Bible, anyway, the Temple existed and was destroyed in 587 BC²⁴.

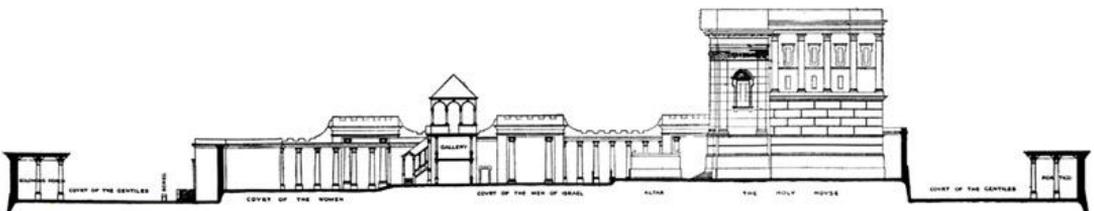


21. Charles Chipiez, *The Temple area*, 1889

22. William Sanday, *Sectional View of the Temple of Herod, Looking South*, 1903

For the purpose of this research it is not very relevant whether or not the Temple really existed, but the description given by the Bible (with all the measurements) and the graphic reconstructions derived by it.

The Temple itself is described as 60 cubits long, 20 cubits wide and 30 cubits high (26,7 x 8,9 x 13,3 meters). Before the Temple there are two bronze pillars, called Jachin and Boaz, measuring 18 cubits (8 meters) in height and surmounted by a capital of carved lilies, 5 cubits (2,2 meters) high. Before the Temple, a little to the South-East, stood the “Molten Sea”, a large bath of 10 cubits (4,4 meters)

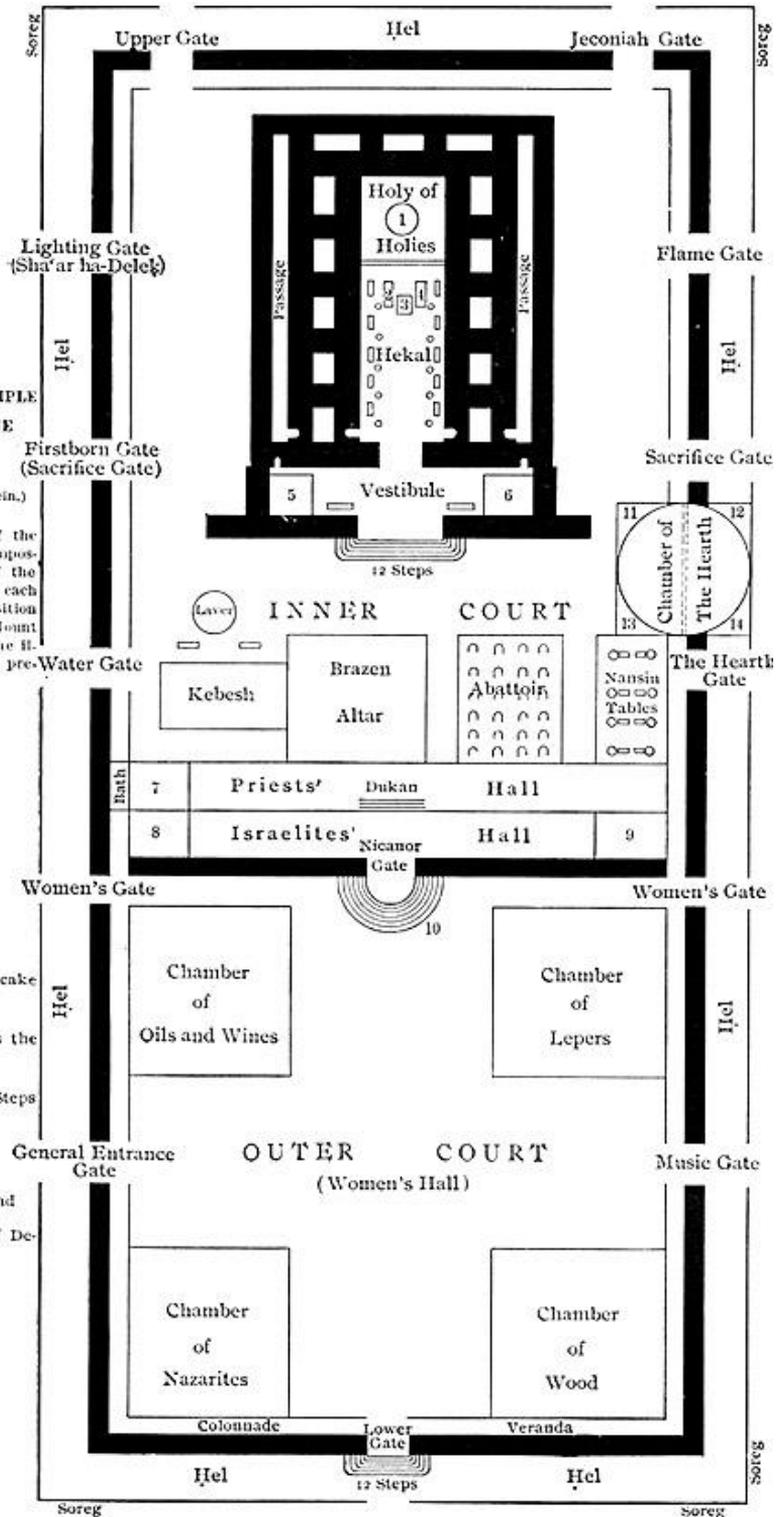


**PLAN OF THE TEMPLE
ACCORDING TO THE
TALMUD.**

(Designed by J. D. Eisenstein.)

NOTE. The smallness of the scale has rendered impossible the delineation of the full number of steps in each staircase. The exact position of the Temple upon Mount Moriah is indicated in the illustration given on the preceding page.

- 1 Eben Shetiyyah
- 2 Candlestick
- 3 Altar of Incense
- 4 Table of Showbread
- 5, 6 Chamber of Knives
- 7 Attic of Abtinus
- 8 Chamber of the Pancake Makers
- 9 Chamber of Phinehas the Vestment Keeper
- 10 Fifteen Semicircular Steps
- 11 Chamber of Lambs
- 12 Bath Chamber
- 13 Chamber of Showbread
- 14 Chamber of Stones of Defiled Altar



in diameter (2 Chron 4:2), probably used for the ablution of the priests, while to wash the victims of the sacrifices there were ten basins (2 Chron 4:6).

The description shows then many characteristics deriving from other previous oriental models of temples. Solomon's Temple is inserted in a complex system of courts, a structure that derived from the Phoenician temples. It is on the summit of a hill, expressing the Babylonian idea of the divine abode, represented by the Ziggurat²⁵. The "Molten Sea" finds a parallel in the Babylonian temples, where a great basin called "*apsu*" (deep) was present, representing the sea and, together with the mountains, gave the idea of the temple as a miniature of the World²⁶.

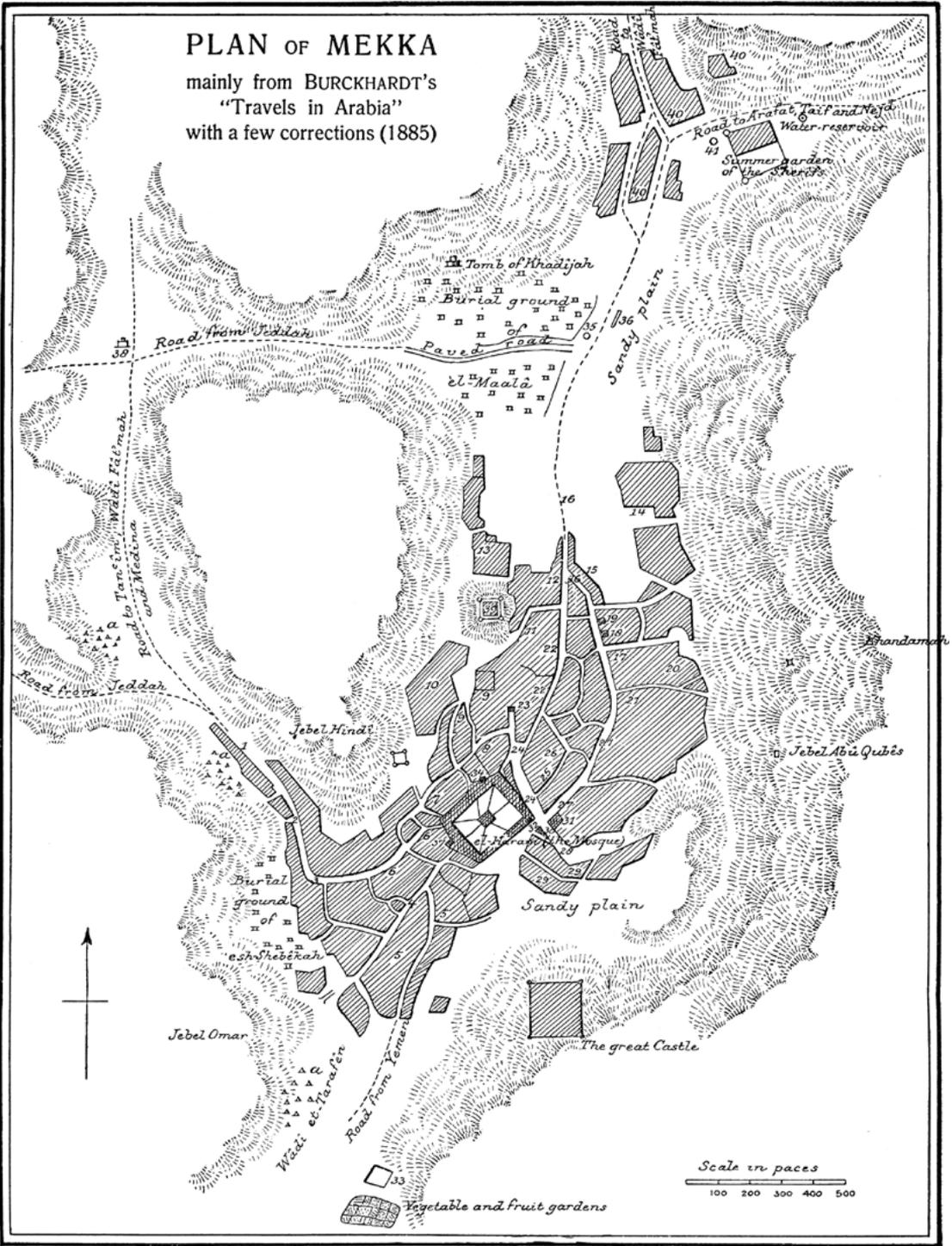
Analysing the description of the interior of the Temple, it appears as divided in three main areas, surrounded by many small service chambers. The vestibule represents the threshold from the external court and the Temple itself (*Hekal*). From the *Hekal*, cedar-wood doors lead to the Holy of the Holies (*Kodesh Hakodashim*). This place is described as a perfect cube measuring 20 cubits (8,9 meters) for each side, being probably set on a higher level than the *Hekal*²⁷. It contained the Ark of the Covenant and two wooden statues of cherubim, plated with gold, and it is a dark space, probably recalling the idea of the divine presence as a cloud, present in many biblical stories of the time of wandering in the desert and in the description of the Temple itself²⁸.

The Temple of Herod, built in 20 BC²⁹, presented similar spatial characteristics and was built on Mount Moriah, where the Bible reports the sacrifice of Isaac was about taking place (Gen 22), the appearance of God to David and the location of the First Temple (2 Chron 3:1).

The Temple itself had the same dimensions than the Solomon's one and to reach it was necessary as well to walk through an inclined system of courtyards and porticoes³⁰. There was an outer court where everybody could gather (not strictly considered part of the Temple), but in the inner court, 15 cubits (6,7 meters) higher, only Jews could enter, and many inscriptions teach us that death penalty was applied to lawbreakers³¹. The inner court was reached by a system of nine gates and it had separate sections for male and a female worshipers, divided by a great gate. As opposed to Solomon's Temple, the partition between the *Hekal* and the *Kodesh Hakodashim* was represented by two curtains, placed in opposite symmetry with the curtains at the entrance of the *Hekal*, making the priest traversing the Temple diagonally, in order to enter the *Kodesh Hakodashim*³².

The Holy of the Holies, placed in the higher part of the Temple, needed a long journey to be reached, passing through many spaces and many thresholds, each time with an increasing grade of "holiness" and a smaller amount of people to whom the access was permitted. It was the most holy and spiritual space of the

23. Julius Eisenstein, *Plan of the Temple according to the Talmud*, 1906



Temple. In the Second Temple, the Holy of the Holies was mainly empty (the Ark was missing) and separated from the *Hekal* by just two curtains, while in the Solomon's a cedar-wood partition was present³³. It was a place where just the highest priest could enter and was crucial during the Day of Atonement, the most important Jewish Holy Day, when the high Priest purified the place with sacrifices³⁴. It is also reported in some texts that the awe of this ceremony was so great that happened that the death of the high priest would occur in the Holy of the Holies on this day³⁵.

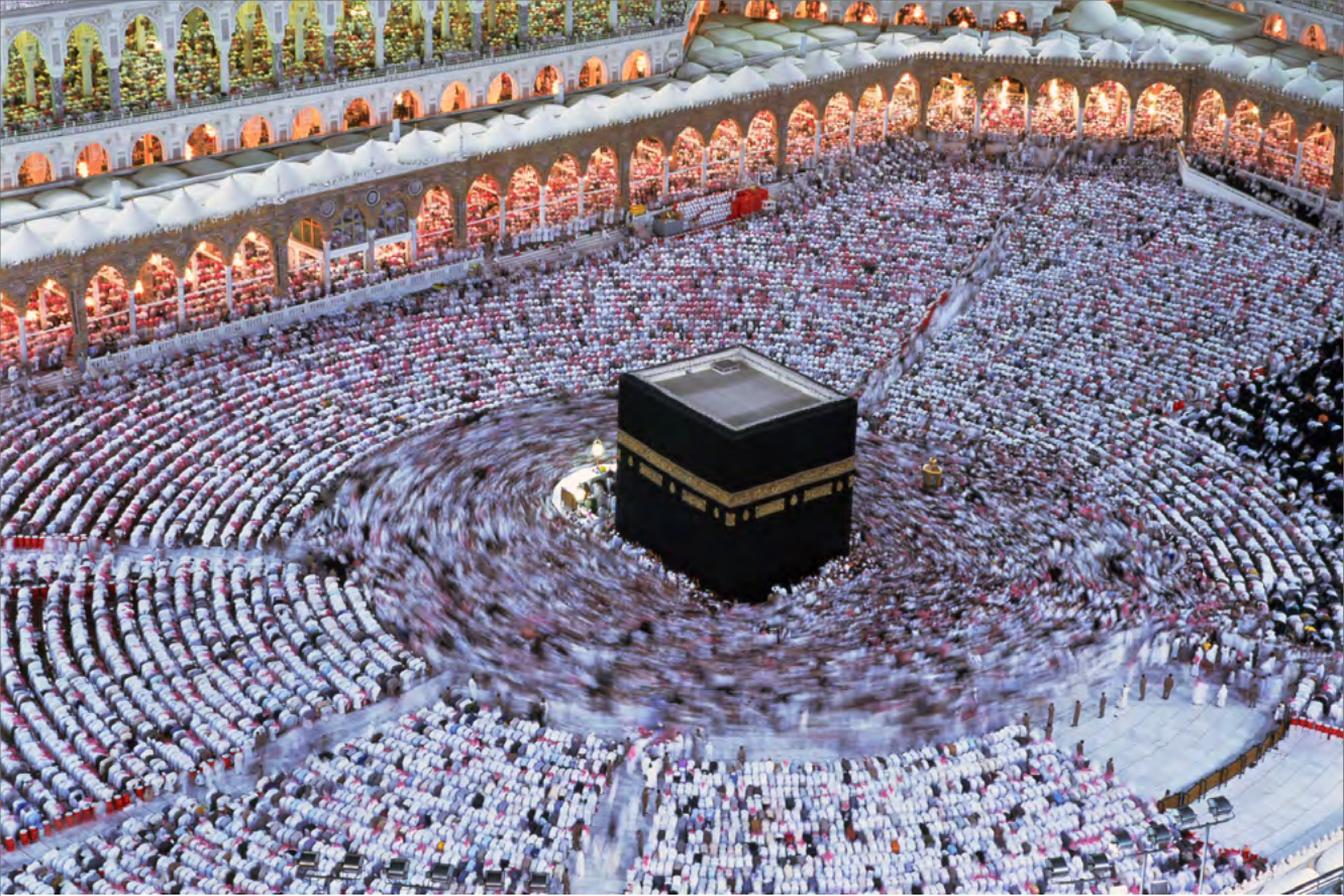
AL-MASDJID AL-HARĀM AND THE KA'BA

The holiest site for Islamic religion is the city of Mecca and the Ka'ba. This site is considered holy since very ancient times and also the presence of the Ka'ba dated back before the Islamic period³⁶. The Ka'ba hosts in one of its corners a black meteoric stone worshiped as holy, that had probably been carried around by nomadic tribes, before finding its resting place in Mecca³⁷. It is almost impossible to determine when Mecca became holy or when the Ka'ba was built for the first time³⁸. With the birth of Muhammad in the city in 570 A.D.³⁹ the site linked its destiny with Islam and the Ka'ba started to be considered not merely the house of the stone, but the "House of God"⁴⁰.

From a spatial point of view it is important that the Ka'ba is surrounded by many concentric levels, with an increasing level of holiness coming from the outside: around the city there is a marked area (*Haram*) where the pilgrims are obliged to maintain themselves in a "high degree of purity" and checkpoints control nowadays the access, forbidden for not Muslim (this sacred territory has been defined in its measures by Muhammad himself)⁴¹; around the Ka'ba there is the sacred ground of the great mosque of al-Masdjid al-Haram, that started with the construction in the 7th-century of the first roofed galleries to separate the holy ground from the growing city around it⁴². It is nowadays still under reconstruction and enlargement⁴³. In this last space the Ka'ba dominates the scene, but it is not the only element, as next to it stands the Maqam Ibrahim (a rock used to be worshiped), the Zamzam (a holy well) and a semi-circular wall (*Hijr*), whilst other structures have been destroyed⁴⁴. Also the Ka'ba itself experienced many works through history, but, while its surrounding had deeply changed its aspect, this building basically didn't change its form since its rebuilding in 683 A.D., after a fire that almost destroyed it completely⁴⁵.

The black cube building of the Ka'ba measures 12 x 10,2 meters, with an height of 15,2 meters, with the only door placed on the north-east wall, about 2

24. Christiaan
Snouck Hurgronje,
Plan of Mekka,
1931



25. Kazuyoshi
Nomachi,
*Pilgrims take part
in the function of
the Night of Power
(Laylat al-Qadr),*
1995.
Mekka

meters above the ground level (a wooden staircase is placed when the building is functioning)⁴⁶. Inside there are three wooden pillars supporting the ceiling, a ladder to go up to the roof, many golden and silver lamps that represent the only furnishings, the floor is covered in marble and many inscriptions are present on the walls⁴⁷. The opening of the building takes place only a few days a year, that change every year by decision of the Meccan authorities, and include the ceremony of the washing of the inside of the building, at the end of the pilgrimage month (Dhu '1-Udidja), and leaving the possibility to enter the Ka'ba in this periods both rare and on merit⁴⁸.

Even if in different shape, with different elements, and in a different culture, the spatial organization of Mecca is once again built on a path, that leads through different levels of holiness, through many thresholds, where each time the access is more strict, to the most holy site, in this case also object of the worship.

THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

Similar to the Jewish Temple and al-Masjd al-Haram, also in Christianity the holy space is organized according to well defined hierarchies and with specific orientation. Selecting a unique site could appear in this case a bit harder, as many shrines are worshiped but none of them is explicitly the most important. On the

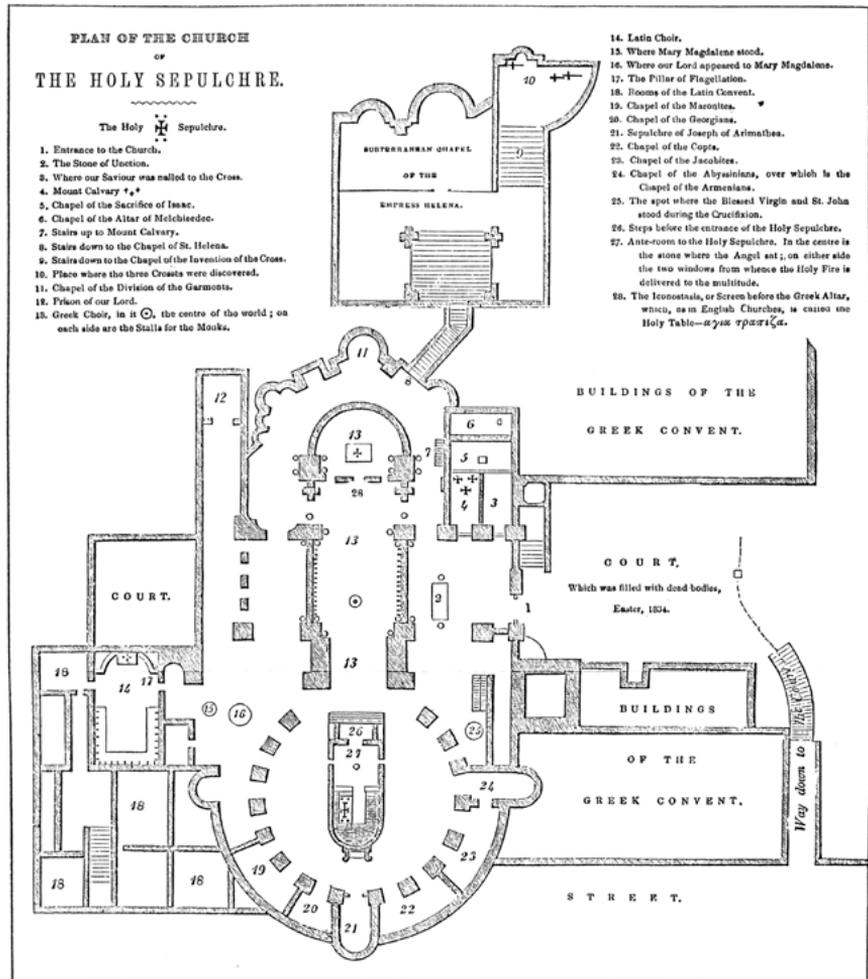


26. David
Roberts R.A.,
*The Shrine of the
Holy Sepulchre*,
1839

other hand the places related with Jesus' life are shared along all the different Christian groups, and archetypal spatial principles can be clearly defined. These principles are related with the concept of the axis and of the centre: the first one derives from the Roman basilica and creates a movement in the space, both in the space of the church, or more widely in the many pilgrimage routes such as the Route of Santiago de Compostela or the Way of the Cross; the second one derives from the Roman *mausoleum* and express an idea of equality. Combination of these two archetypal principles created along history a great variety of sacred spaces.

I had the possibility to have a very interesting conversation with a Jesuit Father, Andrea Dall'Asta, about the sacred space in Christianity⁴⁹. He made me notice is that in Christianity the theophany (manifestation of God) doesn't take place in a specific site but lies in the community itself and in the holy sacrament that re-call the sacrifice of Jesus, representing his real presence. The cult of the relics is just a double of the holy sacrament and takes part in the theophany.

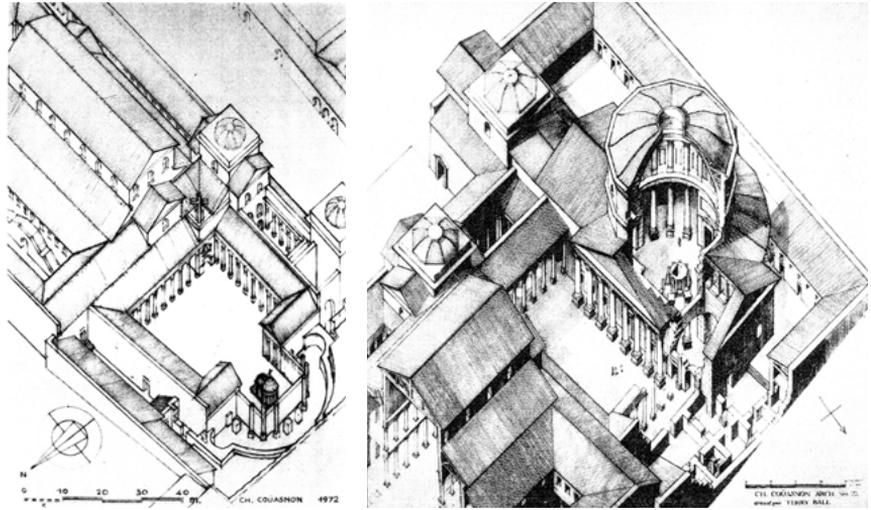
Father Dall'Asta focused then the attention on the principle of the cross plan. This model has been sprawled through history in almost every church building, at least before the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65, when the focus was moved to the dimension of the community and the hall, opening the way to many



27. Plan of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, 19th-century

different spatial models. In the cross plan we find once more an idea of a path (sort of initiation), starting with the space of the *quadriportico*, where the people that are not yet part of the community but started their spiritual route stay. Then is present the narthex (*esonartece* if outside of the church, *endonartece* if inside) that is the place of the view for those who can't enter yet, the aisles, that are the space of the "pilgrimage", the triumphant arch, that separates the aisles from the presbytery, the presbytery itself, place of altar of the sacrifice, and the apsis, that represent the direction of the heavenly Jerusalem, towards which the worshipers are invited to continue.

We can now complete this trip that sought an ancestral idea of space with a short analysis of a very particular architecture in Jerusalem, the church of the Holy Sepulchre. The additions that the different ages and the different strings of Christianity did along the centuries make this place a very not traditional model

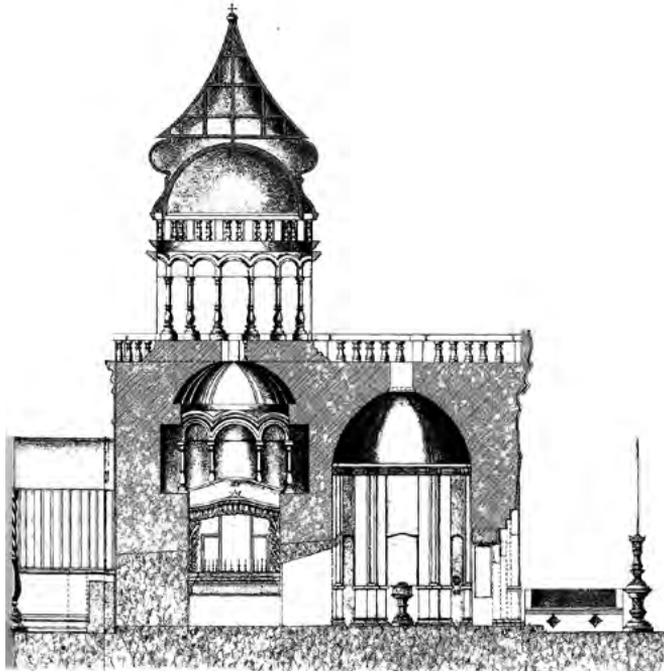


28. Charles Coüasnon, *The Church of the Holy Sepulcher before and after the construction of the Rotunda*, 1972

and it is today very hard to find a clear directionality visiting the site, while it is still clear observing the plans. Final station of the Way of the Cross, the church presents an interesting sequence of spaces towards Jesus' sepulchre itself.

The present building is more or less the same one left in the 12th-century by the Crusaders⁵⁰, even if in 1808 a big fire damaged important parts and required a major work of restoration⁵¹. The original building dated back to the 4th-century, when Constantine decided to destroy the temple that Hadrian set over the tomb of Jesus to prevent Christians for reverence the site⁵². In 326 A.D. the temple was completely removed, revealing that the tomb was still intact⁵³. The building, completed by 335 A.D., was a huge basilica with many of the traits of the cross plan model described above⁵⁴, with the entrance on the eastern side. The tomb itself was placed in a courtyard open to the sky in the back of the basilica, occupying the western part of the complex⁵⁵. Originally it was surrounded by rocks and was placed in a cave, but since the beginning of the construction the gravestone has been left as a free standing element, protected by an aedicule building⁵⁶. The destruction of the church by the Persians in 614 A.D.⁵⁷ and then the major intervention of the Crusaders changed the form of the church, enclosed in a new "envelope", and the movement inside. The entrance now takes place from the southern side (a *quadriportico* was present but nowadays one of the sides is missing) and the space does not have a defined direction of the movement: after the entrance there is the space with the Stone of the Anointing (originally one of the two aisles) and then the movement can proceed on the right or left, or even on an upper level.

What is relevant to consider from the viewpoint of this research is the space of



29. *Section of the aedicule*

next page
30. *The Rotunda*,
2016.
Jerusalem

the Rotunda, the round area around the tomb itself. Even if not present in the first plan of the building, the construction of this space followed after a few years⁵⁸, probably on direction of Constantine himself⁵⁹, and it represent the only part that, even with some modifications in the elevation, remained almost the same through the centuries⁶⁰. It is a semi-circular space⁶¹ accessible through a colonnade from south-east and north-east, having then the possibility of ambulating around the aedicule. The entrance to the tomb itself takes place from east, through a very small atrium that leads to the even smaller room that contains the gravestone. Pilgrims today stand in a long queue to enter in small groups of four people, touch the stone and go out after few seconds. In contrast with this tiny space is the monumental dimension of the Rotunda⁶², that host all the movement of the worshipers and represents the main focal point of all the church complex, with a diameter around 20 meters and the height of the dome (recently restored and completed in its actual shape⁶³) around 30 meters.

Also in this example, the focal point, the most Sacred core, is part of a complex system of spaces, where the passage of many threshold is necessary in order to reach it. This could be the result of historical overlapping of elements or of a united plan, but this doesn't radically change our perception of the space and the spiritual value associated to it.



3.B _ ARCHITECTURE FOR THE SPIRIT

“L'importante, appunto, non è di essere praticanti ma d'essere artisti e cioè di essere capaci di interpretare il fatto religioso “come se”. Del resto la storia insegna che pochi santi (il Beato Angelico) hanno saputo essere grandi artisti ma che v'è stato più d'un miscredente (o di credente a suo modo) (quasi tutti gli artisti del Rinascimento) capace di compiere “il miracolo” realizzando un capolavoro d'arte religiosa”

Ernesto Nathan Rogers⁶⁴

“In Arkitektur kann man alles lösen”

Peter Behrens⁶⁵

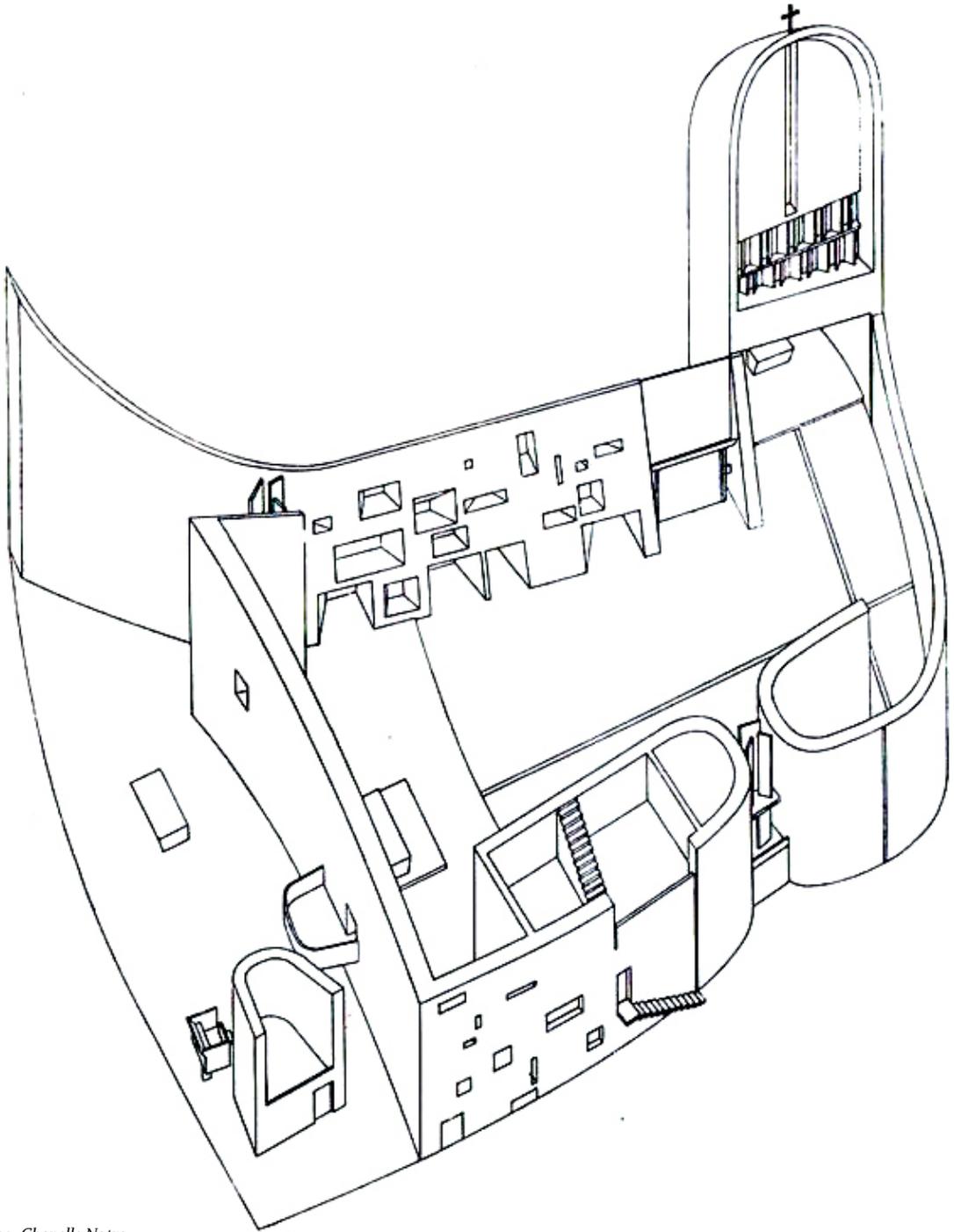
After this short journey seeking the ancestral spatial models that accompanied human beings in the definition of the “sacred” and its spiritual implications, it is relevant to consider our contemporaneity, with a time warp of many centuries. It is the contemporary architecture that we confront in our everyday experience and, even if the ancient can provide us important principle still valid (and universal, in the viewpoint of this research), we somehow always experience this spaces as something “stranger”, something that has not been built for us. But if the aim is to design nowadays a “Space for the Spirit”, in a specific context, this space is for the people of today, and, hopefully, for the future.

In 1955 Le Corbusier completed the realization of the “Chapelle du Notre Dame du Haut” in Ronchamp, causing a large debate and fracture in the Modernism between supporters of the project (including Gropius, Mies, Giedon, Rogers) and opponents (including Pevsner, Stirling, Argan) that attacked very strongly this building, very far from the rationalist principles developed also by the same Le Corbusier, that was seen as a traitor of them⁶⁶.

I think that the debate, and especially the one hosted by the Italian magazine *Casabella-Continuità* between E.N.Rogers, G.C.Argan and G.De Carlo is very important in order to set the development of the last 60 years of architecture, when it comes to the spirituality. After the great praise of Rogers for this work⁶⁷, Argan criticized it for the character of monument, far from the social and

31. Pino Musi,
*Chapelle Notre
Dame du Haut*,
1996.
Ronchamp,
France





32. *Chapelle Notre
Dame du Haut
(axonometric view
from north)*

community function of the church, and for the use of scenic effects to put the people in contact with the faith⁶⁸. Argan wrote his opinion of what should be a modern church in this way:

“Allora la chiesa sarà luogo di riunione e, sia pure, di raccoglimento, non un mezzo per esortare e incitare all'estasi col concorso di ben calcolati effetti di luce e di scenografiche prospettive di piani e di volumi.”⁶⁹

The debate rotates around the fact that the church has a specific function, in which, at that time and from certain point of views, there shouldn't be space for the emotional and even less for the irrational components.

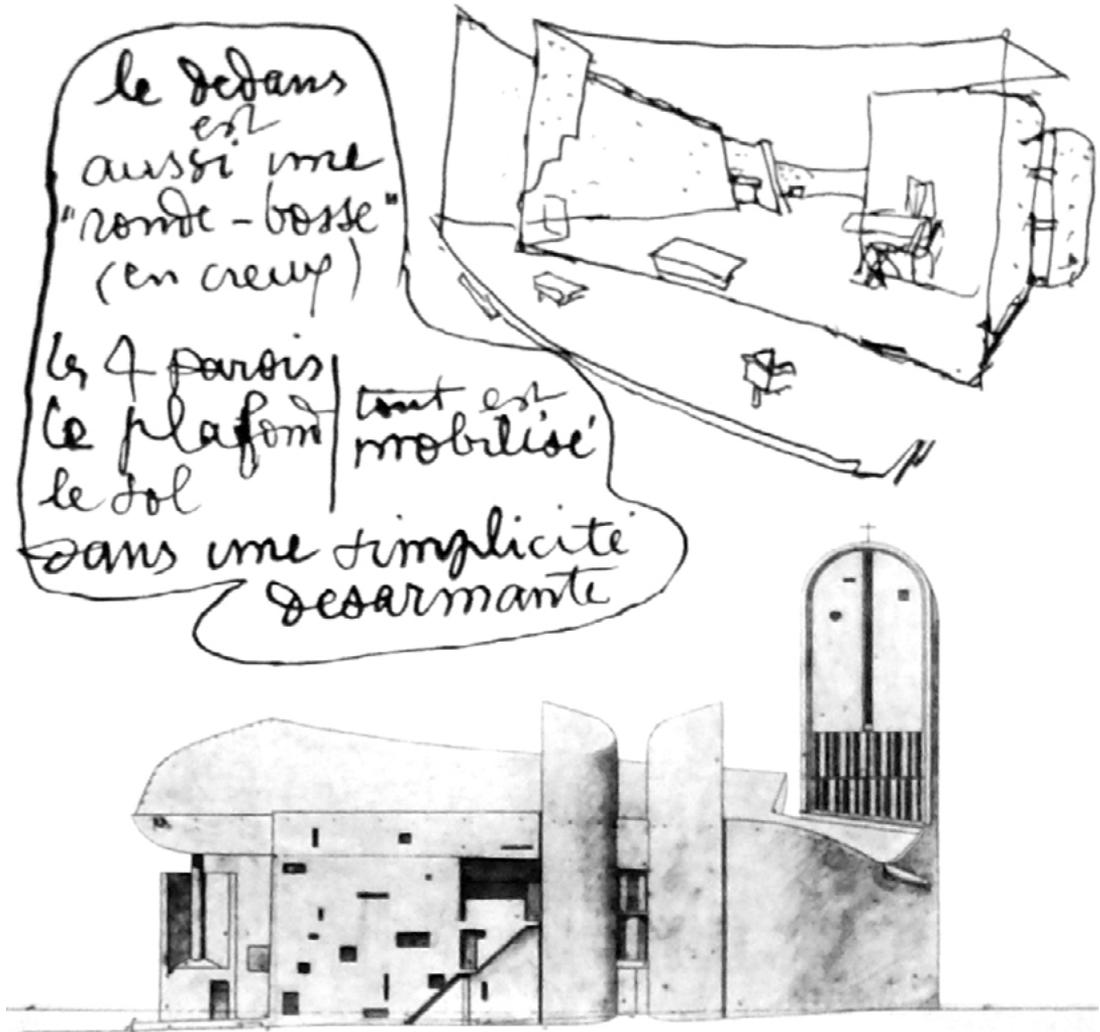
It is interesting to notice that the name of this building is “Chapelle” and not “Église”, even if it is a church, evoking the idea of a chapel, space that is usually less linked with a specific function and more related with an individual and intimate experience than a collective function. Le Corbusier himself wrote that the liturgical needs had a minimum influence on the space, that is directed by the psycho-physiology of the perception, and becomes a place of intimate reflection and meditation⁷⁰. In the speech given in the day of the church's blessing (25th of June, 1955), he said:

“j'ai voulu créer un lieu de silence, de prière, de joie intérieure. Le sentiment du sacré anima notre effort.”⁷¹

In the mentioned debate Rogers seemed to be on the same direction and it is stimulating that his description of the project calls to mind the elements of the Greek temples already mentioned⁷² the isolated “object” placed on a hill, the hard climbing walk to reach it, the diagonal view when approaching it, the large outside space for a huge group of people, compared to the relatively small interior.

Ronchamp is thou an architecture that, moving from a specific need and program, proceeds towards higher and universal needs, where the elements of the perception of the space are crucial in order to achieve the goal. Aldo Rossi in 1960 noticed then how Le Corbusier included in his work all the growing complexity of the time he was living, where the borders between disciplines were becoming thin and Rossi said that in this context Ronchamp marked a correct direction⁷³. Nowadays the context seems to me even more complex and the direction even more relevant, with the interesting Le Corbiuser's attitude that De Carlo, in the debate of 1956, called “*désintéressé*”, criticizing an approach of artist detached from the social context in which he works⁷⁴.

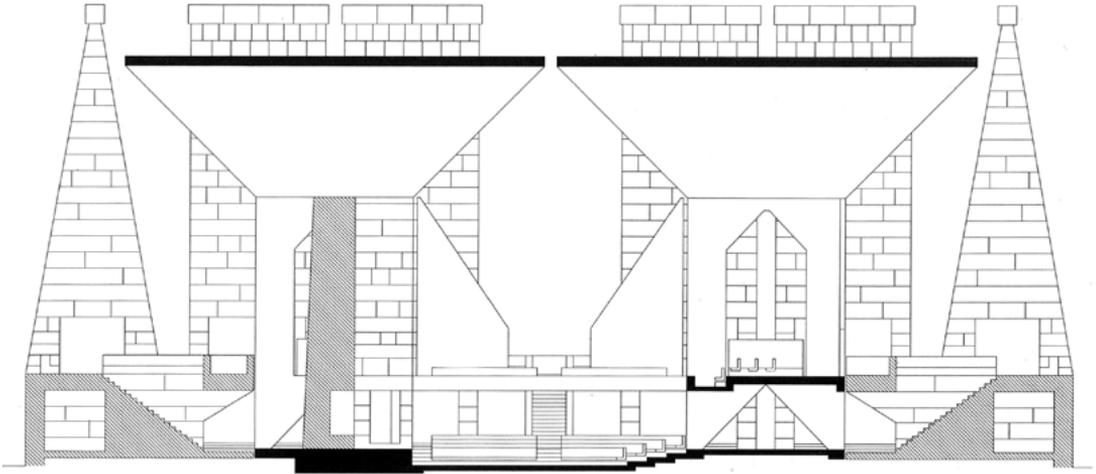
In the 60 years that separates us from these debates many architectural



33. Le Corbusier
 Sketch and elevation
 of the Chapelle Notre
 Dame du Haut

projects have been realized in which we can wonder which is the specific practical function and that seem animated by other values and focused on the perception of the space. Memorials, meditation rooms (such as the room designed by Dag Hammarskjöld in the UN Headquarter of New York, in 1957 or the recent “Luogo di riflessione” by Mopurgo De Curtis Architects in the Shoah Memorial in Milano), rooms of silence (incredible the amount of spaces with this name in Germany, the most famous created in the Brandenburg Gate in 1994) have been built in many occasions and places.

At the same time also the religious architecture has had to confront with these topics. The architecture of the churches left in the years of the Le Corbusier's Ronchamp the traditional typological schemes that lasted for centuries, in a



34. *Hurva synagogue*
(section, 1st proposal)

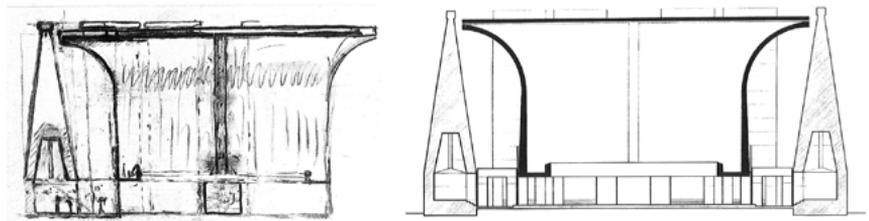
35. Louis I. Kahn,
Sketched sections of
the Hurva synagogue
(2nd proposal)

direction that reached the peak with the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65, but had some precedents, for instance in the works of Rudolf Schwarz, that anyway condemned this project of Le Corbusier and his “subjective” approach⁷⁵.

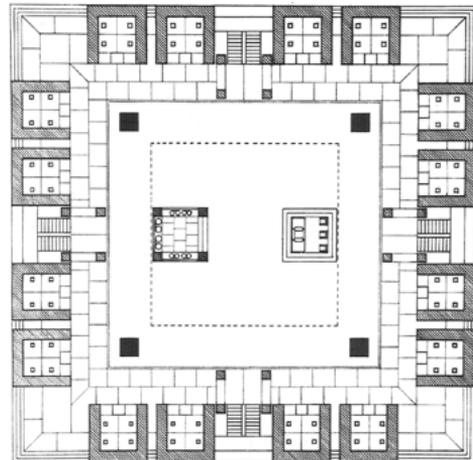
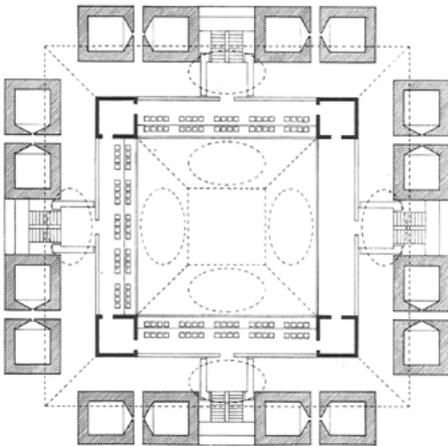
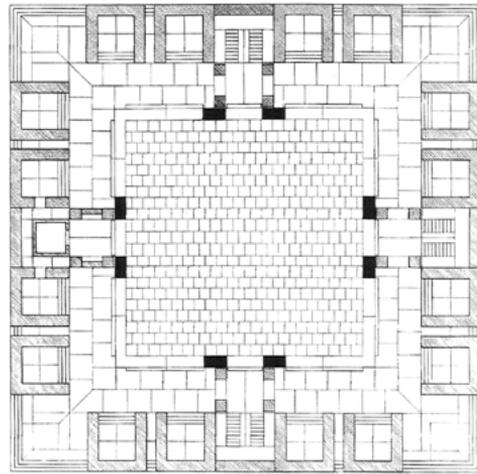
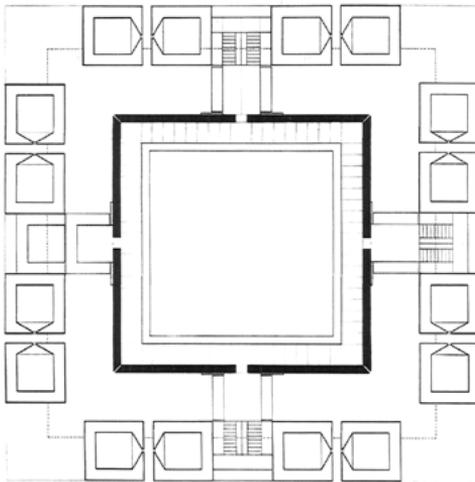
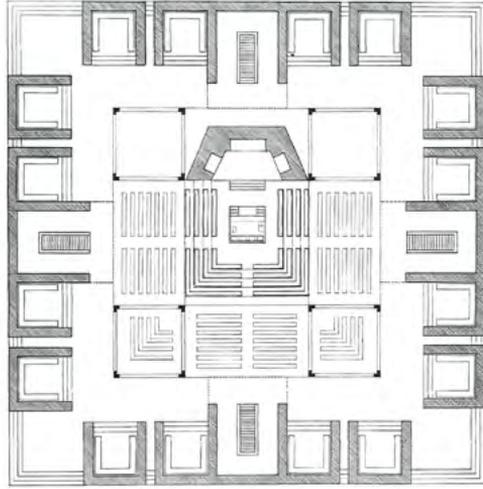
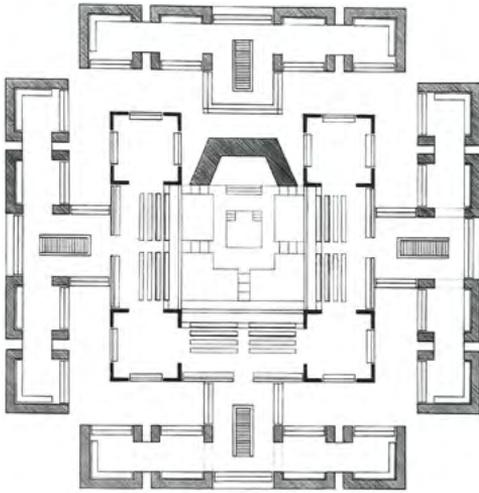
In the decade that followed the project of Ronchamp, Louis I. Kahn developed the project for the Hurva Synagogue of Jerusalem, project not realized due to the death of the architect and replaced in recent years by a much less interesting building that retraces the original building of the 19th-century. The character of Kahn’s project, in all his three different proposals, is monumental and very different from any previous example of synagogues. His references are the Egyptian temples and the Solomon’s Temple⁷⁶. All the project rotates around the visual relationship with the city and the light, in what Kahn himself called a “natural architecture of Jerusalem”⁷⁷ and described saying that:

“The outside of the building belongs to the sun, the interior belongs to the shadow. It is a place where people live.”⁷⁸

Especially in his second proposal (1969) he aimed to an architecture that relates with the sublime, the mysterious, out of functional concerns (interesting that the human scale disappears from his section drawings, as well as the



3. SEEKING THE SPACE OF THE SPIRIT





39. Thomas Mayer,
Sancaklar Mosque,
2014.
Istanbul

previous page
36. *Hurva synagogue*
(*plan, 1st proposal*)

37. *Hurva synagogue*
(*plan, 2nd proposal*)

38. *Hurva synagogue*
(*plan, 3rd proposal*)

furnitures from the plans) and with an interest for Boullée's and Ledoux's work⁷⁹. In this mysterious space modulated by the light and the shadow Kahn's doesn't solve the problem of glazing the building, that appears open, with air entering together with the light.

A very recent and much more modest project, the Sancaklar Mosque by Emre Arolar Architecture in Istanbul, invites to think about this topic also in the contemporary Islamic religion context. This project moved from the desire of represent the shapes of a "primary inner world", free from all cultural burdens, creating a space for meditation and reflection⁸⁰. In the main space of prayer the *qiblah* (direction of Mecca) is indicated by a cut in the long concrete wall, from which filtered natural light enters the space.

A small, partial and subjectively selected group of what I would call "Architectures for the Spirit", follows in the next pages.

TOMBA BRION (1969-78, C. SCARPA)

Masterpiece of Carlo Scarpa, Tomba Brion is a funerary complex inserted in the cemetery of San Vito d'Altivole, in the north-east of Italy.

On a L-shape plot of 2200 sq.m.⁸¹ the project of a family tomb became for Scarpa the occasion to design a very complex place, rich of different atmosphere, composed by a chapel (temple), the tomb itself (*arcosolium*), a meditation pavilion, an entrance system (*propylaeum*), a place for the relatives tombs, the tomb of the architect himself. The amount of meanings, of direction of the movement, of choices of the architect are almost infinite, giving an unique richness to this place.

The plan is organized on orthogonal directions (almost aligned with the cardinal ones), with the use of a 45° angle for the *arcosolium* and the chapel. In the first case this permits to create a focal hinge point in the corner of the L-shape, in the second permits to get full light from north, east, south and west⁸². Two accesses are present, the one through the *propylaeum*, at the end of the main path inside the existent cemetery, and the one from the access road, more private. The deep study of the views and perceptions led Scarpa to raise of 70 centimetres all the rectangular area surrounding the plot, creating a division in the L-shape and allowing from inside to look out of the perimeter wall but not vice versa⁸³.

Entirely built in concrete, the complex finds in the vegetation and the water its fundamental materials. Scarpa said that “Water is the source of life”⁸⁴ and becomes the occasion of many levels of meaning, related with the passage towards death and with the idea of purification. The vegetation became year after year increasingly dominant characteristic of the place and Scarpa already envisioned it in his drawings, creating a never-ending circle of life and death with the passing of time and seasons⁸⁵.

The meditation pavilion occupies the southern edge of the complex: entering from the *propylaeum*, having in front the concrete wall with two crossing round holes, the movement can proceed to the left, to the tomb and the other spaces, or to the right, where a gate that can disappear in the floor mediates the access to the pavilion. Passing the gate, a concrete boardwalk leads in the middle of a pond, where four columns, deeply in the water, support a wood parallelepiped that identifies the place.

Yutaka Saito, in his passionate description of this place, defines it as an “architecture in its purest form, both belonging to and transcending all cultures”⁸⁶

40. Tomba
Brion chapel,
2016.
Altivole,
Italy

next page
41. Tomba
Brion (plan)

42. The meditation
pavilion

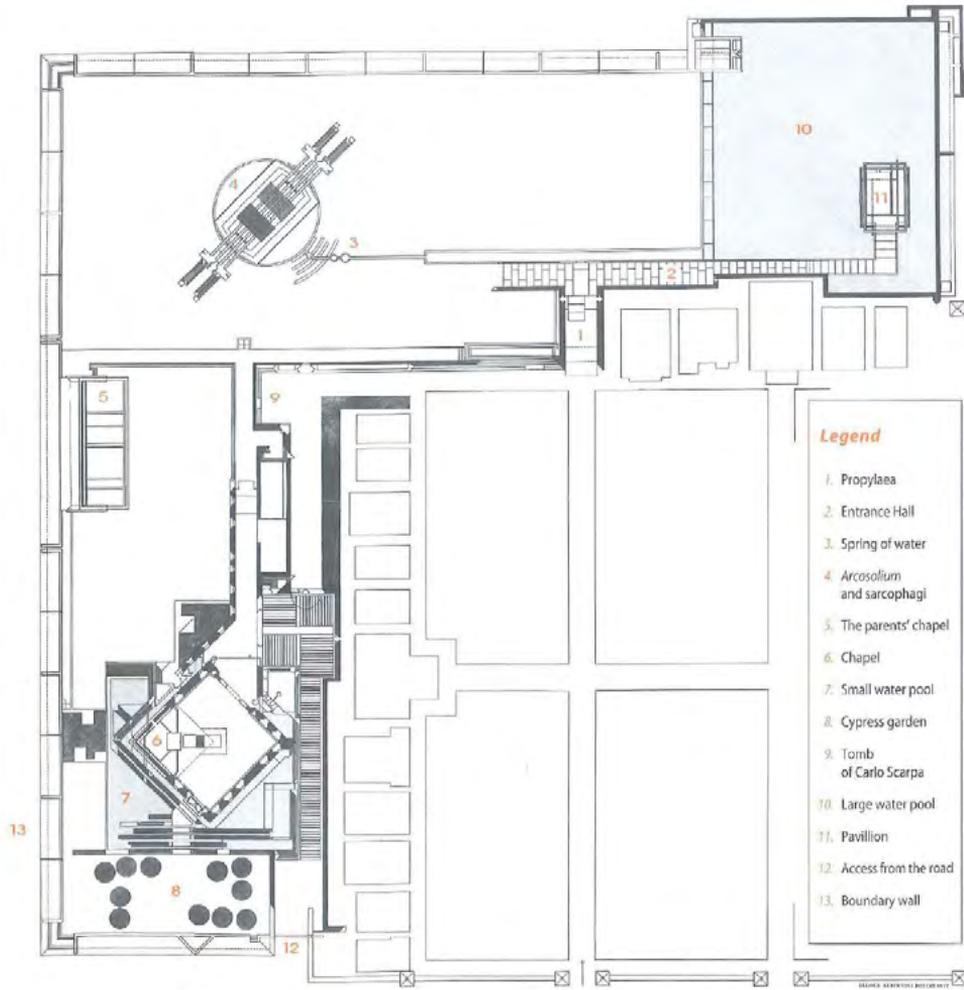
43. The wall of
the propylaeum

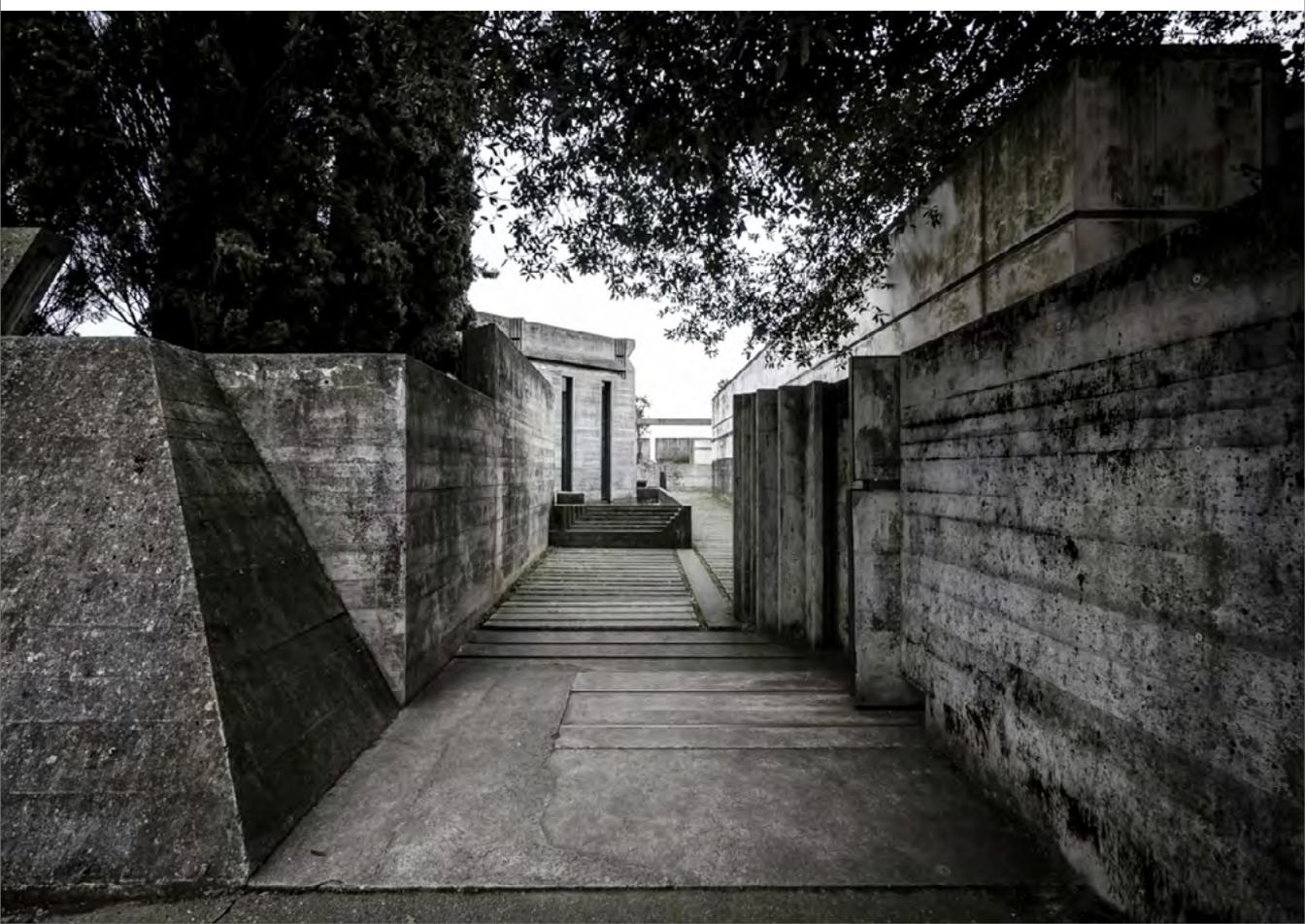
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44. The access
to the chapel

45. The access
from the road



3. SEEKING THE SPACE OF THE SPIRIT



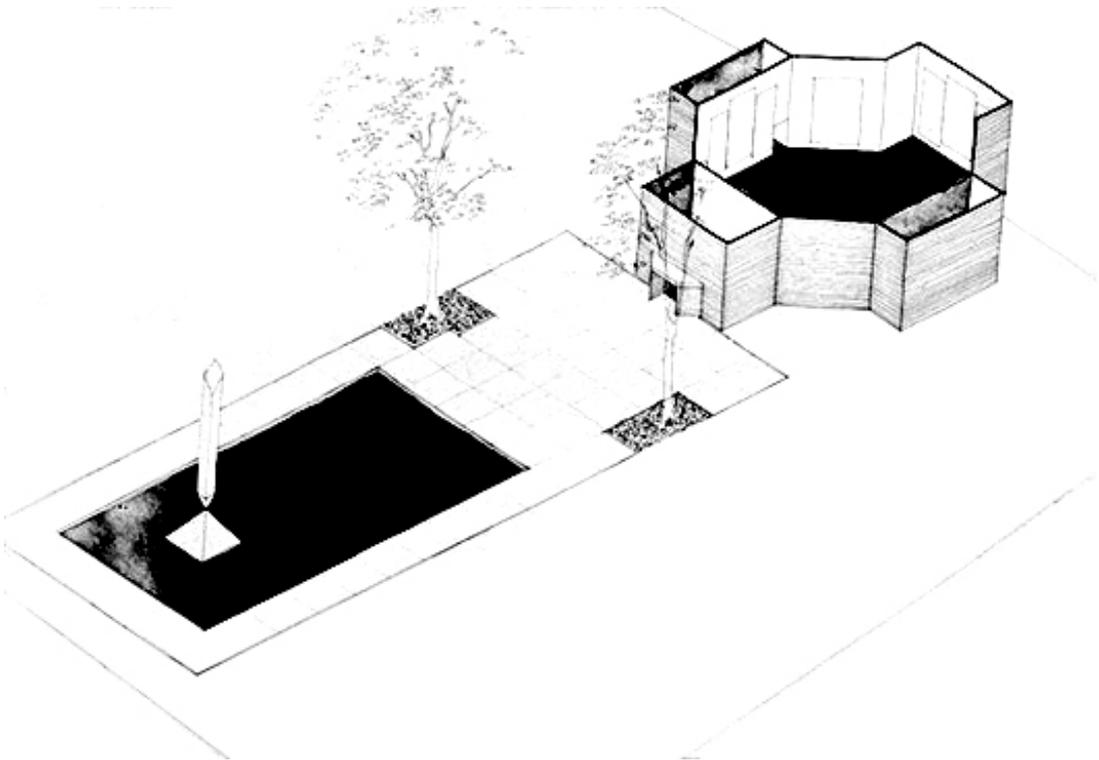


ROTHKO CHAPEL (1964-71, M. ROTHKO)

The project of this chapel started as a Catholic place (the plan almost didn't change from the first option), but changed into a non-denominational space for meditation, open to every culture⁸⁷. It has been inaugurated with the presence of dignitaries of the Jewish, Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Muslim and Buddhist faiths⁸⁸. The project, final masterpiece of Mark Rothko, that took an active role in the planning and realized the fourteen paintings that characterize the interior, saw the contrast between the artist and the architect appointed, Philip Johnson: Rothko wanted a skylight lighting as present in his studio and refuses the idea of having white walls as support of his paintings⁸⁹. The contrasts made Johnson leaving the work.

The building, part of the University of St. Thomas, has an octagonal shape and it is built in brick. The interior has a shaded lighting from the top, four benches and it is dominated by the paintings, that have a colour range between blue, purple and black.

Outside, in front of the main entrance a water pond hosts a pyramidal sculpture, which shape challenges the notion of gravity.





previous page
46. Rothko chapel
(axonometric view)

47. The outside space

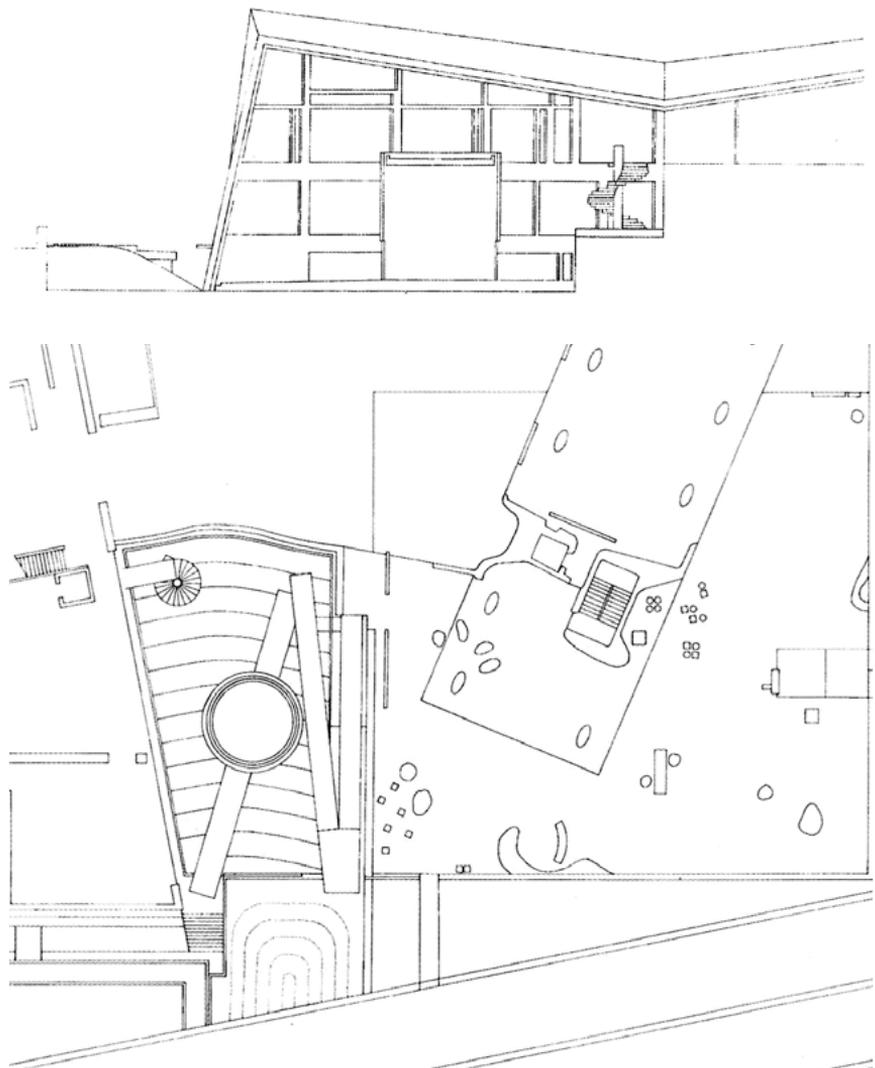
48. Chad Kleitsch,
*Meditating in the
Rothko Chapel*,
2009.
Houston



MEDITATION SPACE (1994-95, T. ANDO)

In the Paris Unesco headquarter, (designed in the 50's by Marcel Breuer, Bernard Zehrfuss and Pier Luigi Nervi) Tadao Ando was invited to design a meditation space, in the 50th anniversary of the organization.

The access to the room is provided by a zig-zag ramp that connects two parts of the UNESCO building in one of its courtyards. The Ando's project is a concrete 6,5 meters high cylinder, on an area of 33 sq m⁹⁰. The lighting is provided by a gap between the walls and the ceiling, supported by four connections to the structure, and by the two entrances, lacking of doors.



49. Meditation space
(plan and section)



50. *The inside space*

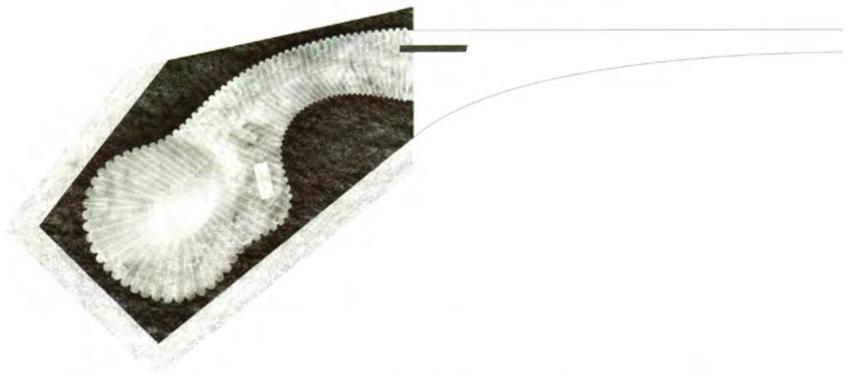
51. *The access ramp*

BRUDER KLAUS CHAPEL (1997-2007, P. ZUMTHOR)

The votive chapel designed by Zumthor for a farmers family in Eifel, Germany, is a tower in the middle of an open field, a place for personal meditation, not consecrated to any religion, as the same architect writes⁹¹, even if including some symbols related with Christianity and the cult of the Saint Bruder Klaus.

As asked by the clients, the building was built by the family itself and their friends, using 112 wood trunks to create, following an ancient technique, the interior formwork on which concrete was laid in 24 layers, up to the 12 meter height of the building⁹². The outside of the chapel presents a irregular pentagonal shape. At the end of the work the wood, that gave a conical shape to the interior, was burnt, leaving the trunk's shapes imprint in the concrete of the walls and the smell of smoke to the space, described by Zumthor himself as "light and shade, water and fire, material and transcendence, the earth below and the open sky above"⁹³

52. Peter Zumthor,
Bruder Klaus chapel
(plan and sections)



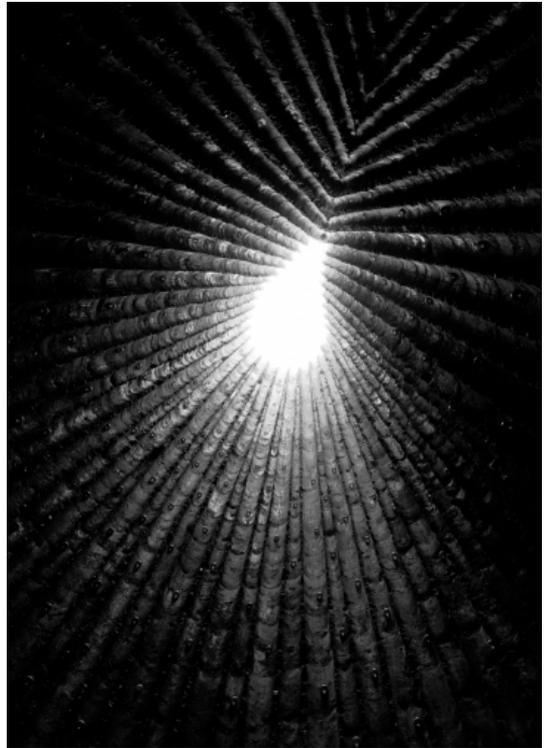
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53. Peter Zumthor,
Bruder Klaus chapel
(model)

54. H el ene Binet,
Bruder Klaus Kapelle,
2007-09.
Mechernich,
Germany

55. H el ene Binet,
Bruder Klaus Kapelle
(interior),
2007-09.
Mechernich,
Germany

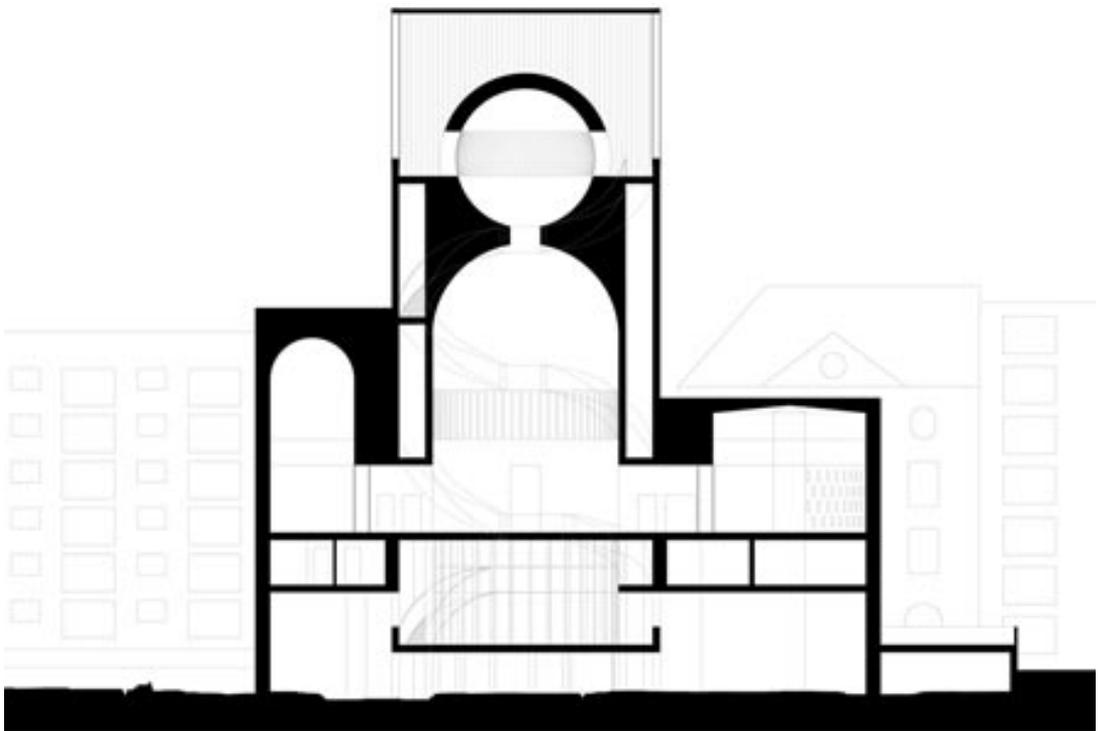




HOUSE OF ONE (FROM 2012, KUEHN MALVEZZI ARCHITECTS)

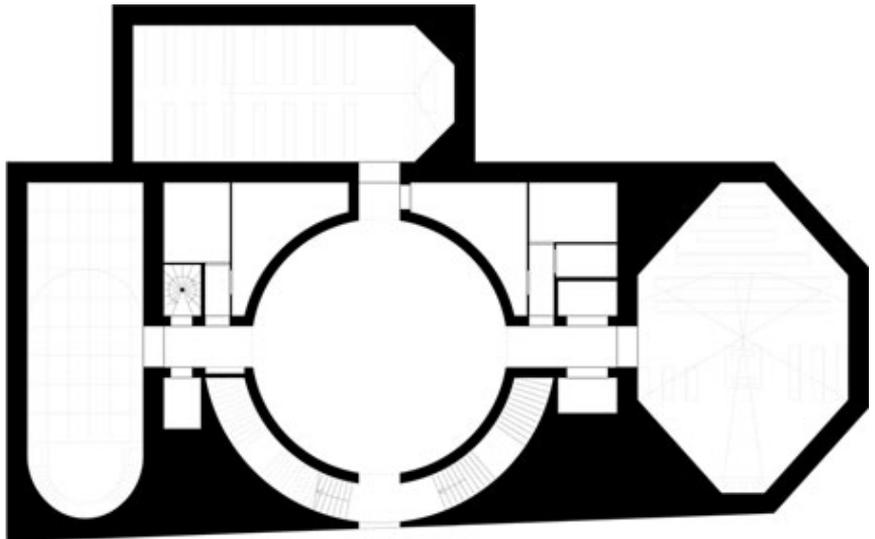
Winning a competition of 2012, Kuehn and Malvezzi designed a place where the three main monotheistic religions can meet and find a moment of exchange. They decided to not create a unitary space, but three different ones, underlining the cultural differences that can become a reason of contact and learning. The first name of the project was in fact “House of prayer and learning”⁹⁴

The three spaces are inserted in a polygonal brick tower, that will be built on the archaeological rests of the St. Peter church in Berlin⁹⁵. The most interesting space, for the direction of this research, is central one, a round room that link all the three different religious spaces, covered by a dome with zenith lighting. A staircase inside the walls of this space permits to reach the rooftop, discovering a sphere volume (not completely visible from the outside) that mediate the light of the round gathering space below





previous page
56. Kuhen Malvezzi
Architects,
House of One (plan
and sections)



57. Kuhen Malvezzi
Architects,
House of One
(interior view)

58. Kuhen Malvezzi
Architects,
House of One (plan)

STORYBOARD FOR THE FILM ON THE CONTINUOUS MONUMENT

(1971, SUPERSTUDIO)

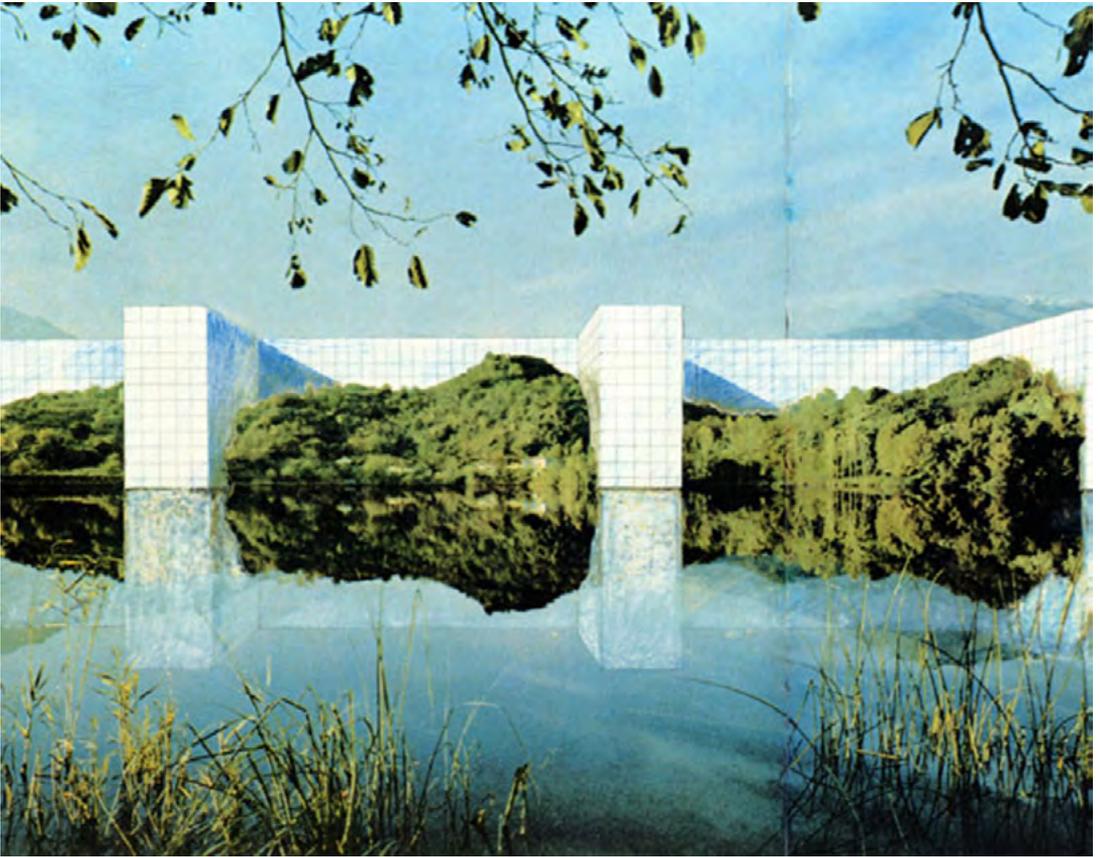
Not a building, not even a project, this storyboard was published on the number 358 of the Italian magazine *Casabella*. It tells the story of the genesis of the Continuous Monument, central expression of the conceptual and radical architectural ideas of Superstudio. Superstudio showed in many other concepts, such as the drawings and stories of the Twelve Ideal Cities, an idea of going back to the roots of architecture, to the roots of human needs, in a mixture of ancestral and futuristic elements.

In the *Storyboard for the film on the Continuous Monument*, the basic geometry, the need of finding a higher order of the things, ancestral human creations such as Stonehenge and the Pyramids are seen as part of the natural inclination of the human being. The Kaaba and the Nasa's Vertical Assembly Building are compared as they are equally cubic buildings that express the need of monumentality, as well as Roman aqueducts, the Great Wall of China and highways, that are expression of a monumentality able to mark and measure the landscape. From the basic shape of a cube, closed in itself, as the first architectural object in the infinite landscape, the scenes move towards all the monumental utopia and construction of the history, quoting Mumford as "The world of ideas, of beliefs, of fantasies and projects is just as real as reality"⁹⁶. Moving then from basic architectural elements (door, corridor, stone, walls) the story brings to the Continuous Monument, the final point that links all the Earth, all the monument and represents all the human needs and aspirations. It is the element able to give order, as this is the role of architecture: "all history lies between chaos and architecture"⁹⁷ is written at the end of the first page of the storyboard.

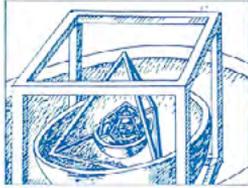
59. Superstudio,
*Continuous
Monument*,
1969

60. Superstudio,
*Twelve Ideal Cities
(The Conical
Terraced City)*,
1971

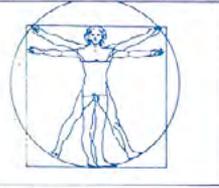
Next pages
61. Superstudio,
*Storyboard for
the film on the
Continuous
Monument*,
1971



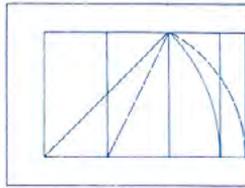
3. SEEKING THE SPACE OF THE SPIRIT



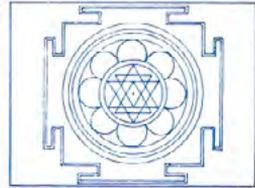
1. Keplero cercò di inscrivere dei solidi elementari nelle orbite dei pianeti.
Kepler tried to inscribe elementary solids within the orbits of the planets.



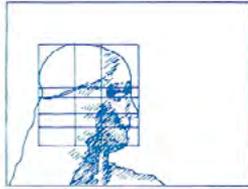
2. Vitruvio e Leonardo inscrivono l'uomo in un cerchio, gli indiani sistemarono il caos nel mandala.
Vitruvius and Leonardo inscribed man within the circle, the Indians placed chaos within the mandala.



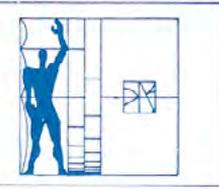
3. La sezione aurea, l'ordine, la simmetria erano insieme visione del mondo e mediazione per comunicare la natura delle cose.
The golden section, order, symmetry, were at the same time a vision of the world, and a medium for communicating the nature of things.



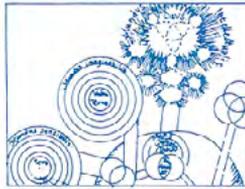
4. Il mandala come base per la meditazione è il tentativo di ordinare e dare un senso ad elementi divergenti.
The mandala as a basis for meditation is a tentative try at ordering and giving a sense to diverging elements.



5. Il desiderio di rendere il mondo chiaro e distinto ha segnato tracciati regolatori sul viso umano e sul mondo.
The desire to render the world clear and distinct has left regular paths upon the human face and on the world.



6. creando sistemi basati contemporaneamente sull'uomo e sulla geometria (come il Modulor).
creating systems based at one and the same time upon man and upon geometry (such as the Modulor).



7. L'uomo non è il centro delle cose, è solo uno dei vertici del poligono infinito che unisce cosmo, mondo, ragione.
Man is not the centre of things, he is merely one of the vertices of the infinite polygon that unites the cosmos, the world, reason.



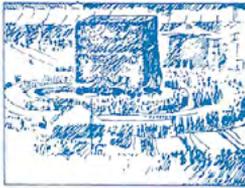
8. L'astrologia collegava le manifestazioni umane agli astri: le scienze rivelano sempre nuove connessioni tra le parti e il tutto.
Astrology connected human destinies and the stars; science is ever revealing further links between the parts and the whole.



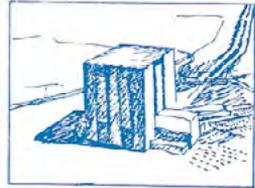
9. Le forme elementari sono la testimonianza di visioni del mondo. Dolmen, menhir, il sacro cerchio di Stonehenge, gli ziqqurat.
Elementary forms are witnesses to different visions of the world. Dolmen, menhir, the sacred circle of Stonehenge, ziqqurat.



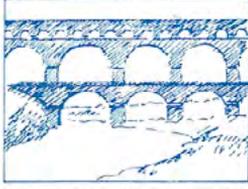
10. dei babilonesi e dei maya, le piramidi egiziane erano monumenti contro la morte, uno dei modi per sopravvivere, riconoscendosi.
of Babylon and of the Mayas, the pyramids of Egypt were monuments against death, one way to survive, in recognizing oneself.



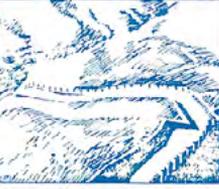
11. Prendere coscienza del bisogno dei monumenti serve a colmare la frattura fra razionalità e inconscio: così si può osservare che...
To realize the need for monuments is to fill in the fracture between rationality and the unconscious; thus one may observe that...



12. La Kaaba e il Vertical Assembly Building sono due uguali cubiche pietre nere, egualmente monumentali.
the Kaaba and the Vertical Assembly Building are two identical black stones, both equally monumental.



13. Quando poi i segni umani non sono solidi elementari, sono lunghe linee continue, teorie d'elementi, espressioni di una...
Then, when human signs are not elementary solids, they are long continuous lines, a theory of elements, the expression of...



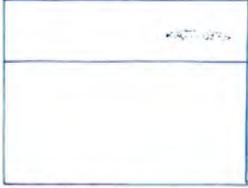
14. stessa volontà di segnare e misurare. Ponti, muraglie cinesi...
the same will to sign and measure. Bridges, Chinese walls...



15. o acquedotti sono sempre monumenti continui ugualmente allungati sulla terra per comprenderla.
or aqueducts are still continuous monuments, also lying full length to embrace the earth.



16. Così fino alle autostrade, alle dighe e ai grandi mandati della tecnica in scala con le nuove dimensioni.
And so on up to the motorways, great dams and huge products of technology on a scale with the new dimensions.



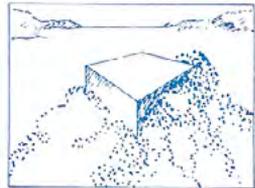
17. Dalla Genesi: - In principio Iddio creò il cielo e la terra, la terra era una cosa senza forma e vuota... e poi dall'Apocalisse: From Genesis: - In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form and void... and then from the Apocalypse:



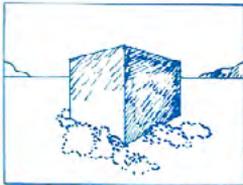
18. « La città era un quadrato, e la sua lunghezza era uguale alla sua larghezza » - Tutta la storia sta tra il caos e l'architetture.
- And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth...; and all history lies between chaos and architecture.



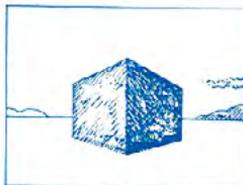
19. La nostra storia è appunto una parabola di formalizzazione, così è una storia di deserti naturali ed artificiali...
Our story is just a parable of formalization, so it is a story of deserts, both natural and artificial...



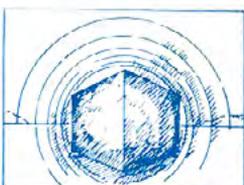
20. deserti dove si posano nuvole o dove nascono nuvole che poi generano apparizioni geometriche lungamente attese.
deserts where clouds may come to earth or where clouds are born, then to generate geometrical, long-awaited apparitions.



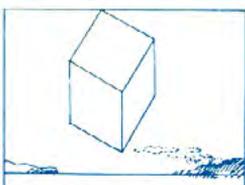
21. Così appare la geometria e il primo per-
sonaggio della nostra parodia il nostro spaz-
ziato e il primo atto e l'ultimo nella...
Thus geometry appears, the first character in
our parable. The square block is the first and
last act in the...



22. storia delle idee d'architettura, come nodo
di relazioni, tecnologia/espressività/utilitarismo tra
uomo macchina strutture razionali e storia.
History of architectural ideas, as the intersec-
tion of the relationships between technology/
sacredness/utilitarianism, between man multi-
ple rational structures and history.



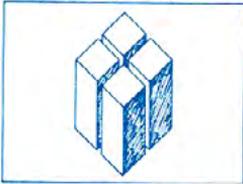
23. L'architettura è un oggetto chiuso e im-
mobile che non rimanda che a se stesso e al-
l'uso della ragione...
Architecture is a closed, immobile object, refer-
ring only to itself and to the use of reason...



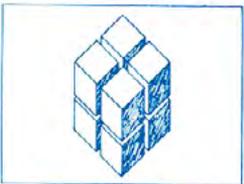
24. un oggetto inconnoscibile che irradia luce
automa e arrestata, fino ad alzarsi in volo nello
spazio isometrico
an unknowable object irradiating light down
rainbows, until it takes off in flight into isomet-
ric space.



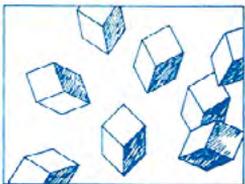
25. Il blocco viene costretto da due cinghie
ad essere un cubo perfetto...
The block is forced into a perfect cube by two
straps...



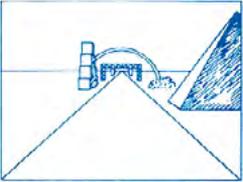
26. e appena liberato si divide in pezzi se-
guendo leggi precise, mostrando volta per volta
i principi generatori...
and as soon as it is freed, it divides up into
pieces, following precise laws and showing each
time its governing principles...



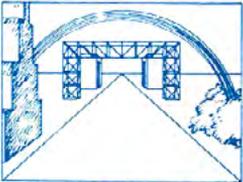
27. Ano a diventare una serie di cubi più pic-
coli, e due piccoli ancora
until it becomes a series of smaller cubes, and
yet smaller...



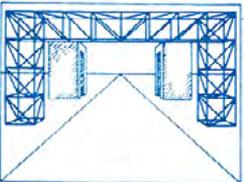
28. e le parti si disperdono ma l'ordine non
perde il controllo e ogni parte ha con sé il
messaggio genetico della sua razza ordinata
and the parts disperse, but order does not ge-
nerate disorder and each part has with it the
genetic message of its ordered race.



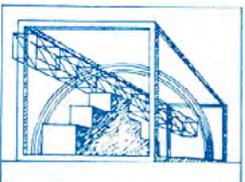
29. UN VIAGGIO IN AUTO IN UN MUSEO DI
VEICOLI DELL'ARCHITETTURA. Souvenirs di viag-
gio da un viaggio nelle regioni della ragione.
A CAR JOURNEY TO A DRIVE IN MUSEUM OF
ARCHITECTURE. Souvenirs from a journey into
the realm of reason.



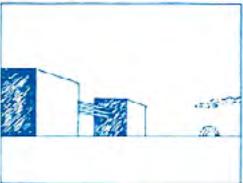
30. Dall'architettura dei monumenti attraverso
l'architettura delle immagini e l'architettura tec-
nocratica all'architettura della ragione.
From the architecture of monuments through
the architecture of images and technocratic
architecture to reach the architecture of reason.



31. (durante il viaggio ci sono appanizi di
monumenti antichi, scaboteni e muove al neon,
macchine traccio e statue).
(throughout the journey there are apparitions of
ancient monuments, rainbows, neon clouds, ma-
chines steel framework and statues).



32. L'arrivo trionfante al tempio della Ragione
Pura (scritta - nella prospettiva storica, la Ra-
gione domina tutto).
The triumphant arrival at the temple of Pure
Reason (banner - in historical perspective, Rea-
son dominates all).



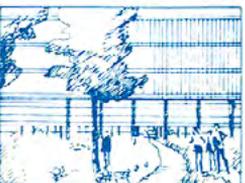
33. COME ILLUMINARE IL DESERTO Due pri-
mi neri di marmo o cristallo collegati da un
arcobaleno al neon per illuminare la mente
posti.
HOW TO ILLUMINATE THE DESERT. Two black
prisms of marble or crystal joined by a neon
rainbow to illuminate the mind, placed...



34. nei deserti artificiali o interiori. Quando il
sole tramonta i tubi cominciano a brillare a
intermittenza, e nei lampi delle...
in artificial or interior deserts. When the sun
goes down, the tubes begin to glow intermit-
tently, and in the flashes of...



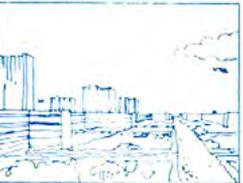
35. visioni appaiono immagini di architet-
tura di sogno, radiosi orizzonti con un filo di
fumo, tempo libero, maisons pour le...
light images of dream architecture appear, ra-
diant horizons with a wisp of smoke, free time,
maisons pour le...



36. week-end immagini di felicità per mezzo
dell'architettura, costruzioni ariose, città ordi-
nate, spazi verdi...
week-end images of happiness through archi-
tecture, airy buildings, ordered cities, green
spaces...



37. Nella luce che aumenta si vedono i nuovi
monumenti della scienza e della tecnica (Cry-
stal Palace) e le utopie (Palantery).
In the growing light, one can see the monu-
ments of science and technology (the Crystal
Palace) and utopia (Palantery)...



38. New Harmony, Philadelphia) e le costru-
zioni eroiche del razionalismo (Weissenhof, Bau-
haus, Ville Radieuse), i cataloghi delle stuoze...
New Harmony, Philadelphia) and the heroic bul-
dings of the age of rationalism (Weissenhof, Bau-
haus, Ville Radieuse), the catalogues of illu-
sions...



39. e delle utopie. « Il mondo delle idee delle
credenze, delle fantasie e dei progetti è zittre-
fatto reale della realtà - (L. Mumford).
and utopias. « The world of ideas, of beliefs, of
fantasies and projects is just as real as reality -
(L. Mumford)



40. I tubi luminosi diventano un arco trian-
golare e sotto ci passano carovane di nomadi,
impagati in gita, processioni di pace.
The glowing tubes become an arch of triumph
under which processions of nomads, white-col-
lor workers on holiday, peace demonstrations,
pass.

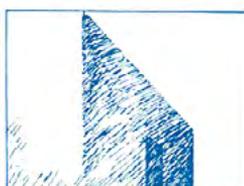
3. SEEKING THE SPACE OF THE SPIRIT



41. LE APPARIZIONI. 1. LA PORTA. «Tutto ciò che abbiamo amato è andato perduto, siamo ormai nel deserto. Davanti a noi non c'è che un quadrato...»
THE APPARITIONS. 1. THE DOOR. «All we have loved is lost, we are now in the desert. Before us there is but a square.»



42. nero su fondo bianco - (K. Malevich). Come una porta, una soglia metafisica.
black on a white ground - (K. Malevich). Like a door, a metaphysical threshold.



43. Un rettangolo neutro, geometrico, come presenza misteriosa tra due mondi. È su questa porta, su questo confine che noi viviamo...
A neutral rectangle, geometric, like a mysterious presence between two worlds. It is on this threshold, this frontier that we live...



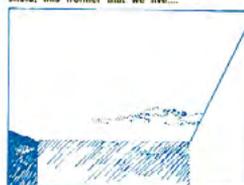
44. In volta in volta convinti della necessità di vivere all'interno del cubo di cristallo o invece di isolarsi nel deserto.
as the case may be, convinced of the necessity of living inside a crystal cube or of isolating ourselves in the desert.



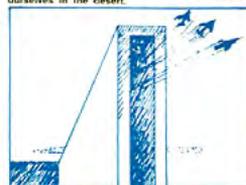
45. LE APPARIZIONI. 2. IL CORRIDOIO. «Fatto ad «U», poggiato in terra con angoli rigidamente retti.»
THE APPARITIONS. 2. THE CORRIDOR. «U-shaped, set on the ground at rigid right angles...»



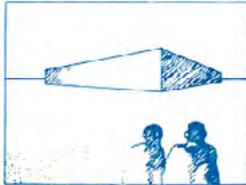
46. Io si percorro con lo sguardo da fuori, se ne esaminano le superfici lisce e lucide...
from the outside, our eyes run over its smooth, shining surfaces...



47. sappiamo che ha un interno, ma non sappiamo come. È disponibile comunque ad ogni utilizzazione.
we know it has an interior, but we do not know how. However, it is at our disposition for any use.



48. Ed ecco improvvisamente uscire tre jets.
And suddenly, unexpectedly, three jets fly out.



49. LE APPARIZIONI. 3. LA PIETRA. Grande e nera giace nel deserto. Come in uno specchio scuro rimanda immagini in movimento di uomini e città.
THE APPARITIONS. 3. THE STONE. Large and black, it lies in the desert. As in a dark mirror, it reflects moving images of men and cities.



50. Poi comincia a muoversi e si alza in volo.
Then it begins to move and takes off in flight.



51. Raggiunge una certa quota e poi rimane parallela alla terra, muovendosi.
It reaches a certain height and then remains parallel to the ground, moving.



52. Dentro ha l'immagine distorta della città, il grande stammi tecnologico. Lo specchio nero in cielo è intelligente e immobile.
Within, it contains the distorted image of the city, the great technological circus. The black mirror in the sky is intelligent and immobile.



53. LE APPARIZIONI. 4. I MURI. In prospettiva con gente che ci passa dentro. Camminare in prospettive parallele (New York).
THE APPARITIONS. 4. THE WALLS. In perspective with people walking between them. To walk in parallel perspectives (N.Y.).



54. All'uscita appare la pietra-specchio che muoversi...
At the exit, the mirror-stone appears, moving...



55. Salza sui muri paralleli e diviene un soffitto e i muri divengono un tunnel buio.
and jumping onto the parallel walls, becoming a ceiling, and the walls become a dark tunnel.



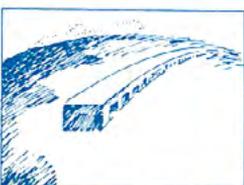
56. Camminare a lungo nel buio e infine vedere un chiarore, e nella luce appare come una linea bianca il MONUMENTO CONTINUO. Walking in the dark for a long time, and at last seeing a faint glow, and in the light, like a white line, we see the CONTINUOUS MONUMENT.



57. Di fronte al destino di progressivo impoverimento della terra e alla prospettiva ormai vicina dello «standing-room only»...
Envisaging the progressive impoverishment of the earth and the now nearby prospect of «standing-room only»...



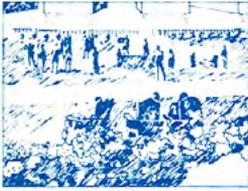
58. possiamo immaginare un'architettura unica con cui occupare lo zone di abitabilità ultimate lasciando libere le altre.
we can imagine a single architectural construction with which to occupy the optimal living zones, leaving the others free.



59. Il modello architettonico di urbanizzazione totale è un'estrapolazione logica di una «storia orientata», da Stonehenge al V.A.B. al monumento continuo.
The architectural model of total urbanization is the logical extrapolation of «oriented history», from Stonehenge to the VAB to the continuous



60. Un'architettura unica capace di dar forma alla terra; (misurandola: come i paralleli e i meridiani), un'architettura riconoscibile.
monument. A single form of architecture, capable of shaping the earth (measuring it, like longitude and latitude), a recognizable architecture.



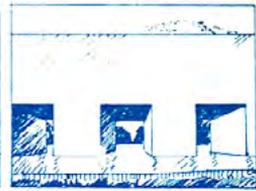
61. Il monumento continua e il polo estremo di una serie di operazioni progettuali incentrate sull'idea del « disegno unico » - un. The continuous monument is the extreme pole of a series of projecting operations, centered round the idea of the « single design ».



62. disegno che si trasporta da un'area all'altra, rimanendo immutato: un'immagine impassibile e inalterabile in cui stacca... a design which can be transferred from one area to another, remaining unchanged; an impassive, unalterable image, whose stabs...



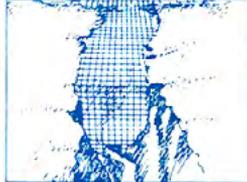
63. porzione nuova il mondo attraverso l'azione che fa nascere per sé. Attraverso una serie di operazioni mentali si può prendere... perfection moves the world through the love of itself that it creates. Through a series of mental operations, one comes into...



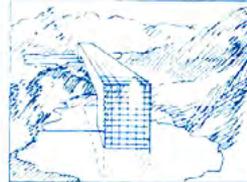
64. possesso della realtà e raggiungere la serenità: così l'architettura è comprensione del mondo e autoconoscenza. possession of reality and reaches serenity; thus architecture is understanding of the world and knowledge of oneself.



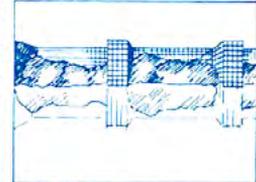
65. LA NATURA. Alcune immagini a caso inquietanti come tutte le cartoline con « saluti da... ». NATURE. Some random images, disquieting as all post-cards bearing « greetings from... ».



66. L'architettura si confronta con la natura senza mimetizzarsi ma presentandosi come unica alternativa: « natura naturans » e « natura naturata ». Architecture faces nature without disguising itself, but presented as the only alternative: « natura naturans » and « natura naturata ».



67. Si possono attraversare deserti, coprire canyon, collegare laghi alpini e anche utilizzare geometrizzare colline e fiumi con nuove orizzonti. One may cross deserts, cover over canyons, join up Alpine lakes, also use, geometrically, hills and rivers with new horizons.



68. O anche altre operazioni su terra, montana e mari, sempre come esempi di operazioni razionali di organizzazione e misura. Or other operations on earth, mountains and sea, always as examples of rational operations, organized and measured.



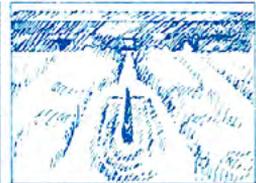
69. I MONUMENTI ANTICHI. La Sacra Kaaba sostituita da un enorme blocco di marmo nero con buchi quadrati e nessuno sa dove sia più. ANCIENT MONUMENTS. The Holy Kaaba substituted by an enormous block of black marble with square holes, and no one knows where.



70. la sacra pietra ma questo non è un ostacolo per una vera fede. Il parlo delle Caratidi come facciata. The holy stone is any longer; but this is no obstacle to true faith. The Caratid Parth as the façade.



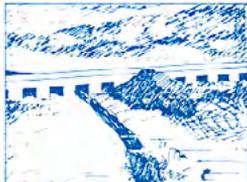
71. il Taj Mahal protetto e climatizzato... the Taj Mahal protected and climatised...



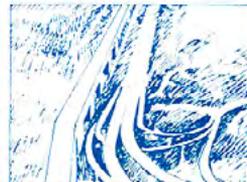
72. un giardino classico a Madrid o anche sopraelevazione del Colosseo, etc. tutte operazioni per absurdum nel « fare grande » a classical garden in Madrid... an additional layer to the Colosseum, etc. all operations - per absurdum - in grandiose style.



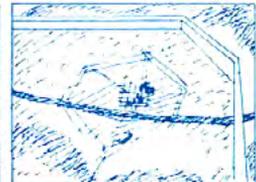
73. LE CITTÀ. Coketown rivisitata: qual'è la utopia? CITIES. Coketown revisited. Where is Utopia?



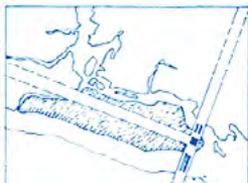
74. Graz con una struttura che collega le zone verdi passando sullo Schlossberg e sul Mur lasciando inalterata la città vecchia. Graz with a structure linking the green zones passing over the Schlossberg and the Mur leaving the old city untouched.



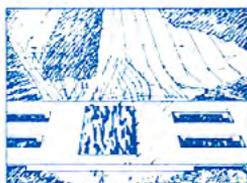
75. L'autostrada è il parametro dimensionale il primo monumento continuo. The autostrada (motorway) is the yardstick of the dimension: the first continuous monument.



76. Firenze antica congelata e portata tra erba e fiori come tavola paragonata per i nuovi pensieri col monumento ai piedi delle colline. Old Florence, frozen and perfect amidst the grass and flowers, to serve as Pythagoras' table for the new way of thinking with the monument at the foot of the hills.



77. New York, per esempio. Una superstruttura sovrasta il Hudson e la punta della penisola comprendendo Brooklyn e Jersey. E una seconda. New York, for example. A superstructure passes over the Hudson and the point of the peninsula joining Brooklyn and Jersey. And a second.



78. struttura ortogonale per l'espansione. Tutto il resto è Central Park. Basta per raccogliere tutto il volume costruito. perpendicular structure for expansion. All the rest is Central Park. This is sufficient to hold the entire built-up volume.



79. Un mazzo di grattacieli antichi, conservati a ricordare il tempo in cui le città si costruivano senza un unico disegno. A bunch of ancient skyscrapers, preserved in memory of a time when cities were built with no single plan...



80. E dalla Bay vediamo New New York ordinata dal monumento continuo come un gran piano di ghiaccio nuvole o cielo. And from the Bay we see New New York arranged by the continuous monument into a great plain of ice, clouds or sky...

continua... 1. Il monumento continuo/storyboard and on film, Superstudio 1969 to be continued... 1. The continuous monument/storyboard for a film, Superstudio 1969

3.C _ THE SPACE OF THE NEO-MYSTIC ART

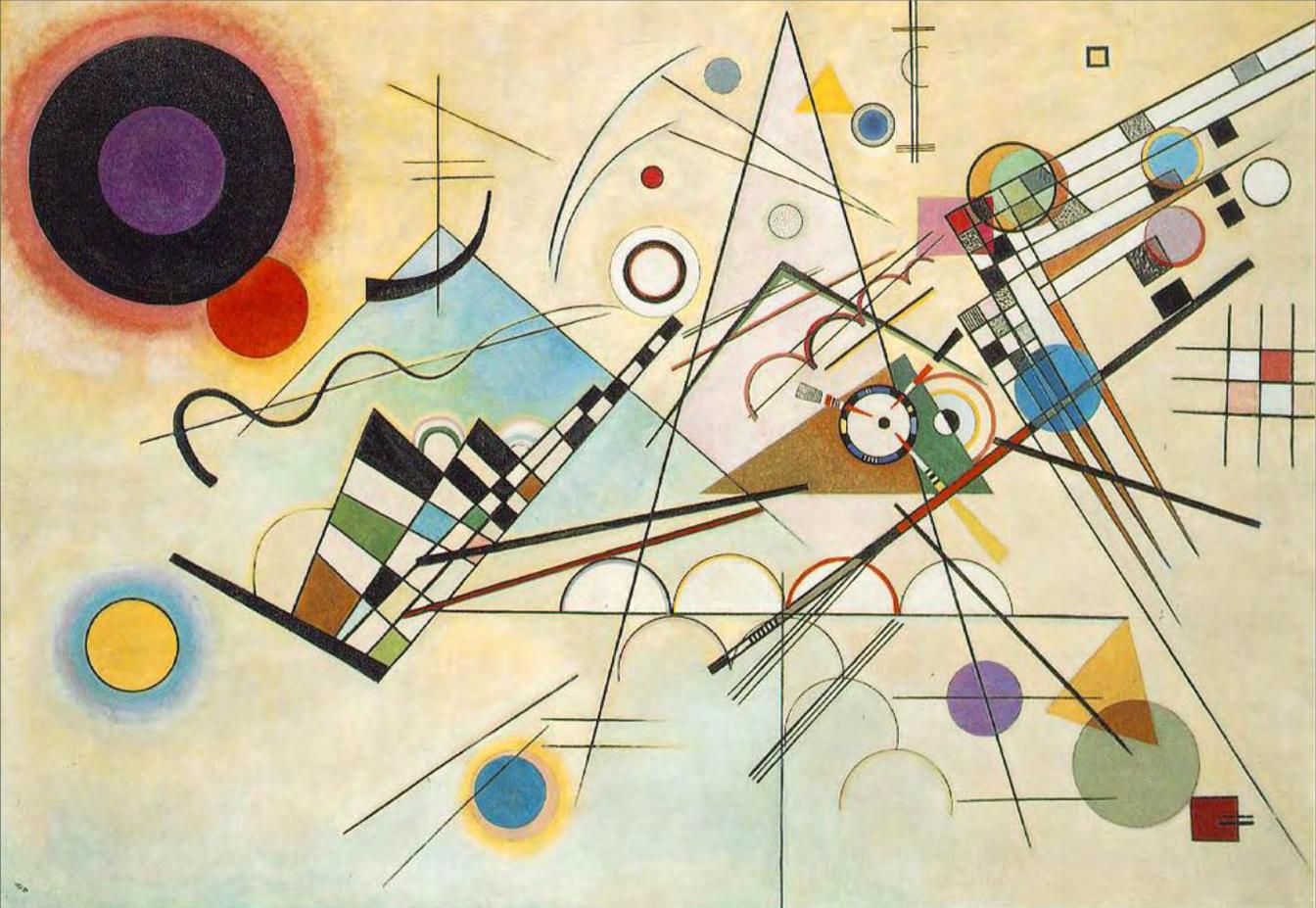
“Literature, music and art are the most sensitive spheres in which this spiritual revolution makes itself felt. They reflect the dark picture of the present time and show the importance of what was at first only a little point of light noticed by the few. Perhaps they even grow dark in their turn, but they turn away from the soulless life of the present toward those substances and ideas that give free scope to the non-material striving of the soul.”

Wassily Kandinsky⁹⁸

In 1912 Kandinsky published his work “Concerning the spiritual in art” in which he marks a strong link between spirituality and artistic production, seen as a fundamental component of spiritual life, in a progressive and ascending movement towards the knowledge⁹⁹. In this work he suggests the need for art to avoid the materialism¹⁰⁰, as the artistic creation, and the spirituality related with, can only be the result of an inner necessity. As he writes:

“All means are sacred which are called for by internal internal necessity. All means are sinful which are not drawn from inner necessity.”¹⁰¹

Core part of this work is the description of the relationships between shapes and colours, inwardness and spirituality, that are the base of Kandinsky’s abstract art¹⁰². He affirms that certain shapes enforce the strength of certain colours (sharp colours like yellow in sharp shapes like triangle, deep colours in round shapes) but that all the combinations of colours and shape are harmonic in a certain way¹⁰³. The fundamental colours of this theory are the yellow (warm, energy), the blue (cold, quiet), the white (the absolute silence full of potential) and black (static, a dead silence). White and black has no movement and are the eternal reference points, while the yellow suggest a centrifugal movement and a movement out of the plane, the blue a centripetal movement, deep in the plane. The green, as result of the combination of yellow and blue, is motionless and brings in time to the boredom, while the red express all the power and possibility of movement¹⁰⁴. What is very relevant in this theory, is the link of colours with emotions, movements, music (for instance the yellow is compared to a trumpet, the blue to a bass), as well as the need of composition within forms and space.



62. Wassily
Kandinsky,
Composition VIII,
1923

Art and religion (and indirectly spirituality) have been linked along all the history but the abandoning of the naturalism after the invention of photography and then the deep cultural changes of the passage towards the 20th-century¹⁰⁵, brought to a new and very contemporary possibility of considering the value of art for the inwardness, for the spirit.

Analysing all the artistic production of the last century in this viewpoint could be very interesting but would lead this research far from its focus. So I prefer to focus on the work of few contemporary artists, that seem to me to move forward on this direction of thinking art as something spiritual, using also archetypical and primitive forms¹⁰⁶ to express a contemporary tension. It is the group of artist that the Italian art critic Vincenzo Trione grouped under the name of Neomystics¹⁰⁷, a name that links us again with spiritual issues. This group includes Frank Stella (USA, 1936), Jannis Kounellis (Greece, 1936), Anish Kapoor (India, 1954), Mimmo Paladino (Italy, 1948), Anselm Kiefer (Germany, 1945), Claudio Parmiggiani (Italy, 1943), James Turrell (USA, 1943), Olafur Eliasson (Denmark, 1967), Wolfgang Laib (Germany, 1950), Ettore Spalletti (Italy, 1940) and Hiroshi Sugimoto (Japan, 1948).

For the purpose of this research I find relevant focusing on the work of Anish



63. Anish Kapoor,
Sketchbook,
2010

Kapoor, James Turrell and Olafur Eliasson, including then one unique work of Ettore Spalletti and one of the sculptor Eduardo Chillida, an artist that work on a similar direction even if not included in the mentioned group.

These artists work out of the flat surface of a canvas, using sculpture and in may cases also creating a space, where the boundary with architecture becomes very thin, if even present¹⁰⁸. The thoughts and the messages promoted by these artists are different, but the spatial sensory experiences created refers in all the cases to something else, in what appears as a deeply spiritual atmosphere.

The work of Olafur Eliasson, the youngest of this selected group¹⁰⁹, is focused on the nature of perception. His artworks are usually placed in existing spaces, that are transformed, often also with mechanical devices, to make the public aware of its perception, of what surround and what is the insight, as suggested for example by the title of a work of 2001, *Seeing yourself sensing*. The perception of time and the “now” and the intersection between nature and artifice are then central in his “illusionistic environments”¹¹⁰.

Anish Kapoor develops his work through sculptures that are in a tight relation with the space in which they are placed and, in many cases, become space themselves, bringing the people inside them, or affect the perception of the space, breaking planes and using deforming mirrors. The void and the darkness are central topics¹¹¹, able to create the perception of an inner dimension, as pointed out by G. Mercurio and D. Paparoni, that relate Kapoor’s work to a return to the origin, believing that there are “archaic forms tied as much to the spiritual dimension as to the corporeal, which thus allow individuals to be reflected in them, and consequently to question or strengthen their own awareness”¹¹². In few artworks he also focuses on Christian religious issues, such as *The Healing of St Thomas* (1989) and *San Gennaro* (2003), in a confrontation between the East, with its Hindu thought and the West¹¹³.

Taking the famous Kahn’s duality of silence and light as the basic elements of architecture, if Kapoor with his voids can represent the first term¹¹⁴, James Turrell represent for sure the second one, in this art that goes to the origins, the archetypes of our experience. Since the beginning of his works, in the end of the 60’s, Turrell didn’t focus on the object but on the light and its experience in human perception¹¹⁵, that are the central element of the work of this artist, that writes:

“We have long used light to reveal things
But it is the thing-ness of light
That light itself becomes the revelation.”¹¹⁶

Turrell realized a large amount of spaces, often independent structures built from scratch, in which the topic of the perception (for instance in the *Ganzfeld series*)¹¹⁷, of the alternation of day and night and astronomic topics are the core of his artwork. The sky has a favoured place next to the light, sky that becomes the focal point of many Turrell’s creations, such as the *Skyspace series*¹¹⁸. In this works the sky is the art piece itself, but is on an infinite distance, very deep, far from the usual perception of art works¹¹⁹, while at the same time the space is perceived as an enclosure, with the sky as a flat ceiling surface.

THE MEDIATED MOTION (2001, O. ELIASSON)

This work, realized in collaboration with the landscape architect Günter Vogt occupied all the space of the Bregenz Kunsthaus by Peter Zumthor. Olafur Eliasson invites the visitor¹²⁰ to move inside the space in different atmospheres (including the museum itself and the outside weather condition, both part of this experience), considering that through the experience of time and of movement he will experience himself, his body. The use of movement to generate space is what the artist calls “the mediated motion”, common in both the urban and natural landscape. In the cities this leads to predictable situations, without surprises, and Eliasson decide in opposition to re-create a natural environment within the walls of the museum, not predictable at all.

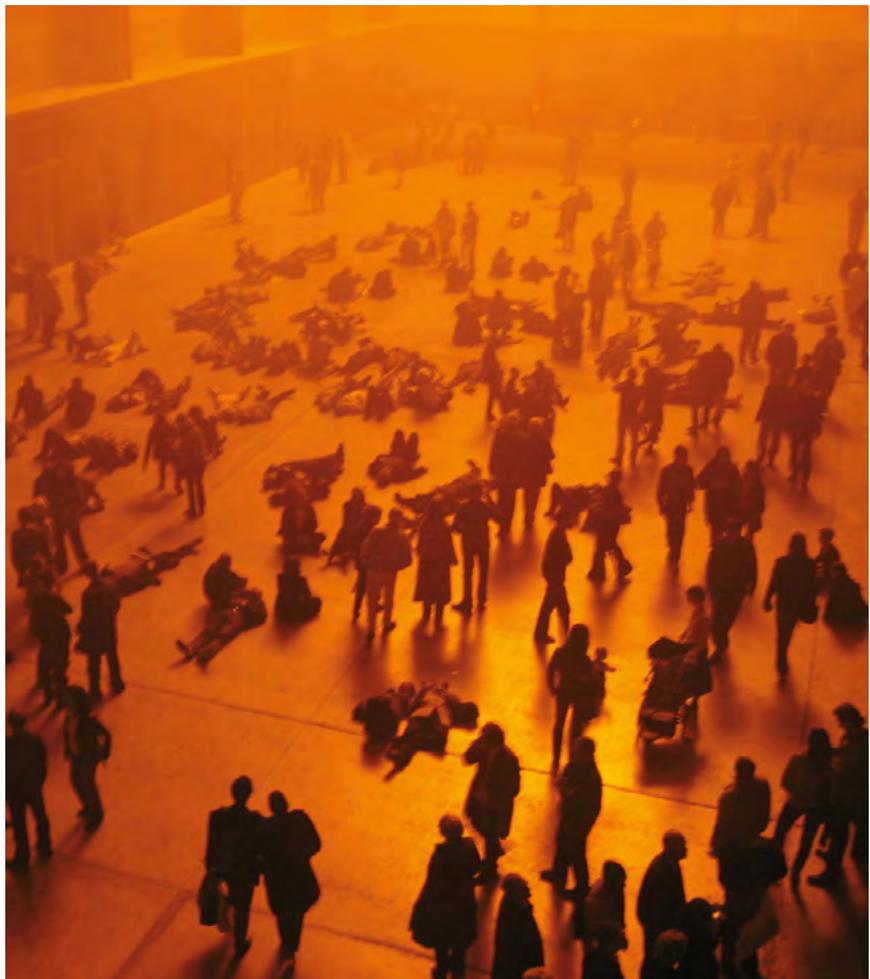


64, 65, 66. Olafur Eliasson, *The mediated motion*, 2001. Bregenz, Austria

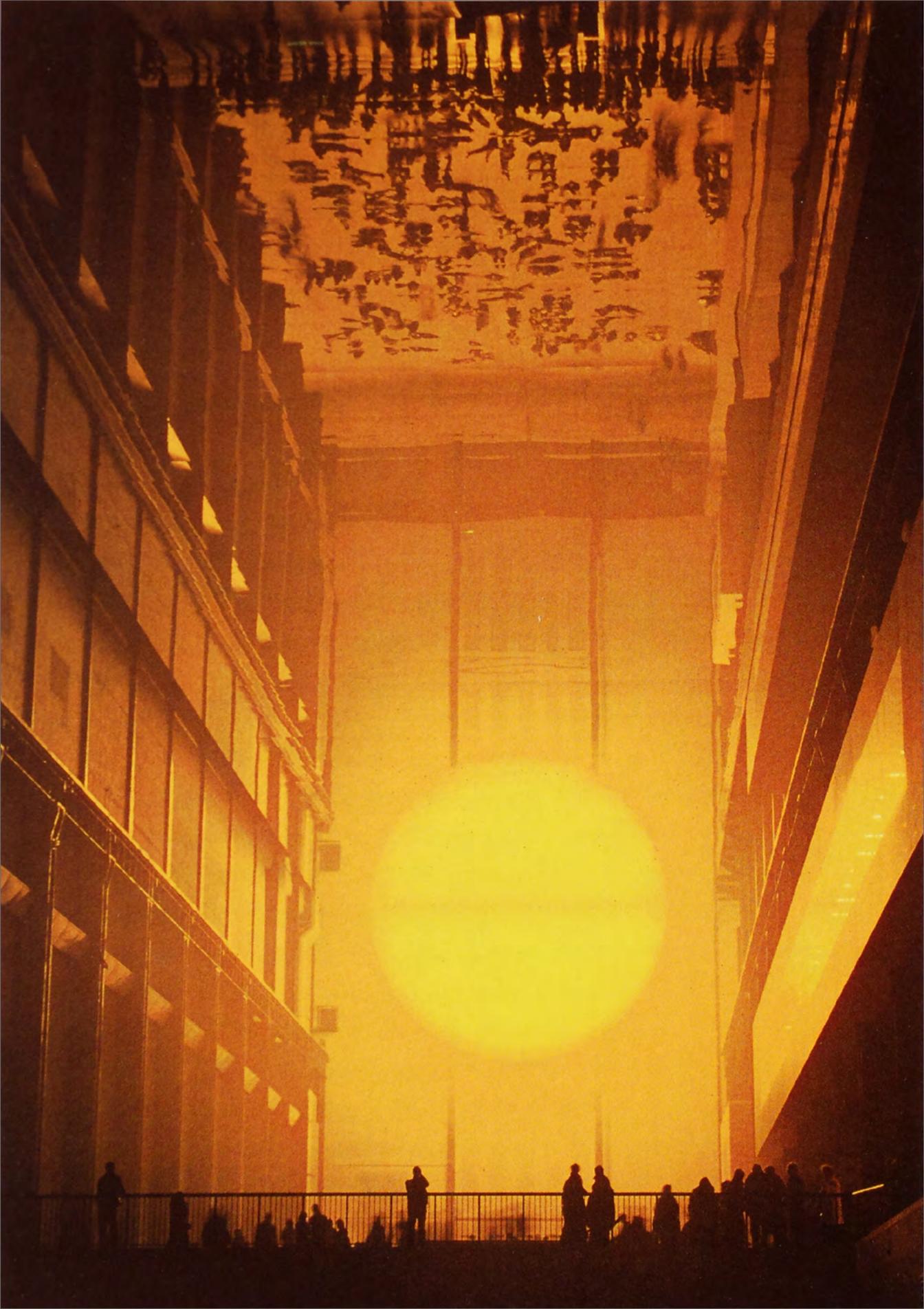


THE WEATHER PROJECT (2003, O. ELIASSON)

Placed in the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern Gallery in London, the work moves from a very common topic of discussion, the weather. In contrast, its representation is completely far from the common experience, in an atmosphere that looks towards meditation and bring the public to behaviours far from the usual ones in museum spaces. The Hall architecture has been obscured and the space is filled by artificial London's fog, with a huge light (diameter 15 meters) creating a sun, placed 27 meters higher than the floor¹²¹. The project is then completed by around 300 mirror panels¹²² that covered all the ceiling and reflect the images of the visitors, walking, standing and laying on the cold floor. The mirrors permits also the illusionistic game of the sun: the lamp that produces it is actually just a semi-circle and other half is created by its reflection.



67, 68. Olafur
Eliasson,
The weather project,
2003.
Tate modern,
London

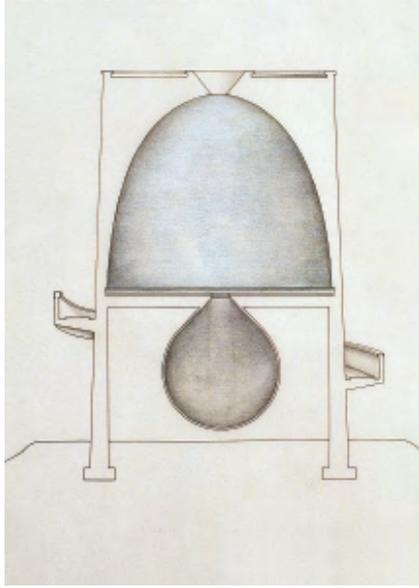


BUILDING FOR A VOID (1992, A. KAPOOR)

This small building realized in Expo '92 in Seville in collaboration with David Connor put the topic of the void in the spotlight. Through a circular ramp that turns around the small "tower", the entrance is reached: inside, in a dome-shaped space, there are just a hole in the floor and an opening in the ceiling that brings a spot of sunlight moving on the floor during the day.



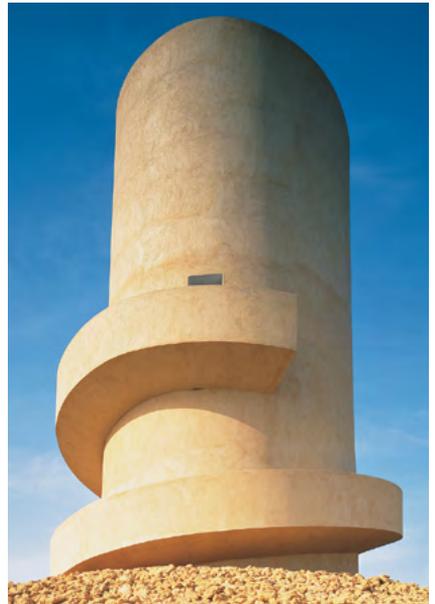
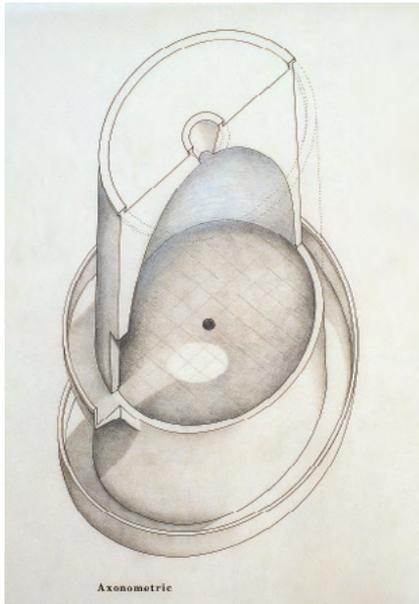
69. Anish Kapoor,
*Building for a
void (interior)*,
1992.
Seville



70, 71. Anish Kapoor,
Building for a void (sketches),
1992

72. Anish Kapoor,
Building for a void
(section model),
1992

73. Anish Kapoor,
Building for a void (exterior),
1992.
Seville



AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD (1998, A. KAPOOR)

In a museum room (Hayward Gallery, London) a red dome with a diameter of 8 meters and 5 meters high¹²³ is pending from the ceiling, taking all the space with its strong presence. The outside is painted in glossy brown colour while the intense red colour of the inside makes difficult for the visitors to properly see the end of the dome when under it. In this way the dome tends to the infinite but at the same time with its uniformity becomes almost a flat object, as happens in many other works of the artist.

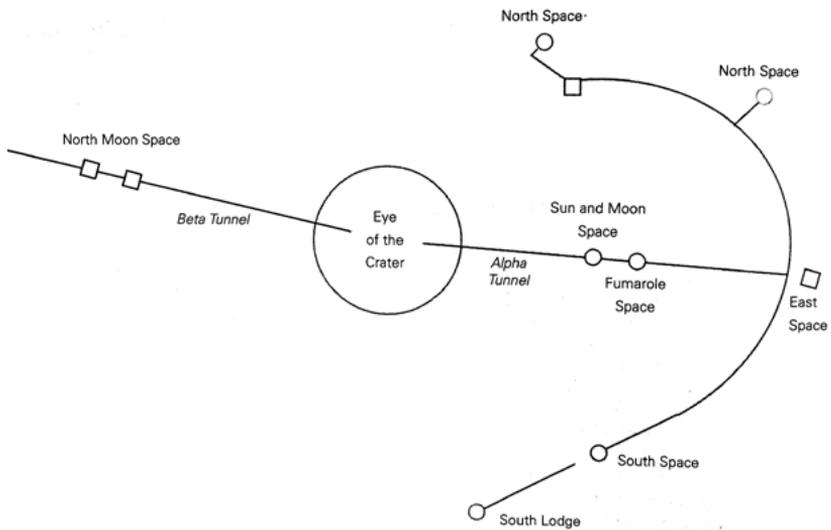
74, 75. Anish Kapoor,
*At the Edge of
the World*,
1998.
Hayward Gallery,
London





RODEN CRATER (FROM 1974, J. TURRELL)

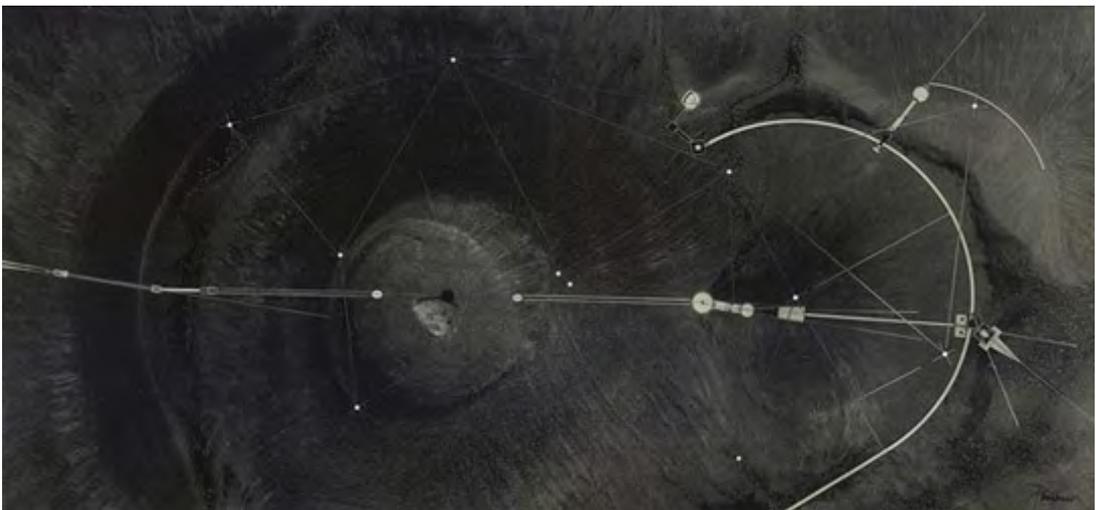
This work, still not completed, occupies James Turrell since 1974, when he identified, after long aerial patrols, a volcanic site in the desert of Arizona that met his topographical and astronomical needs¹²⁴. It is a very huge project, composed by many spaces, with few accesses, linked by tunnels and passages. The spaces are excavated in the volcano ground, being almost not visible from the outside. It serves as a naked-eye astronomic observatory and hosts also some functional spaces, with rooms for visitors that stay during night observation events. Placed in the volcano crater and its surroundings, directed to the sky, it is the edge between two symmetrical abysses, the depths of the sky and the depth of the earth¹²⁵.



76. James Turrell,
Roden Crater scheme

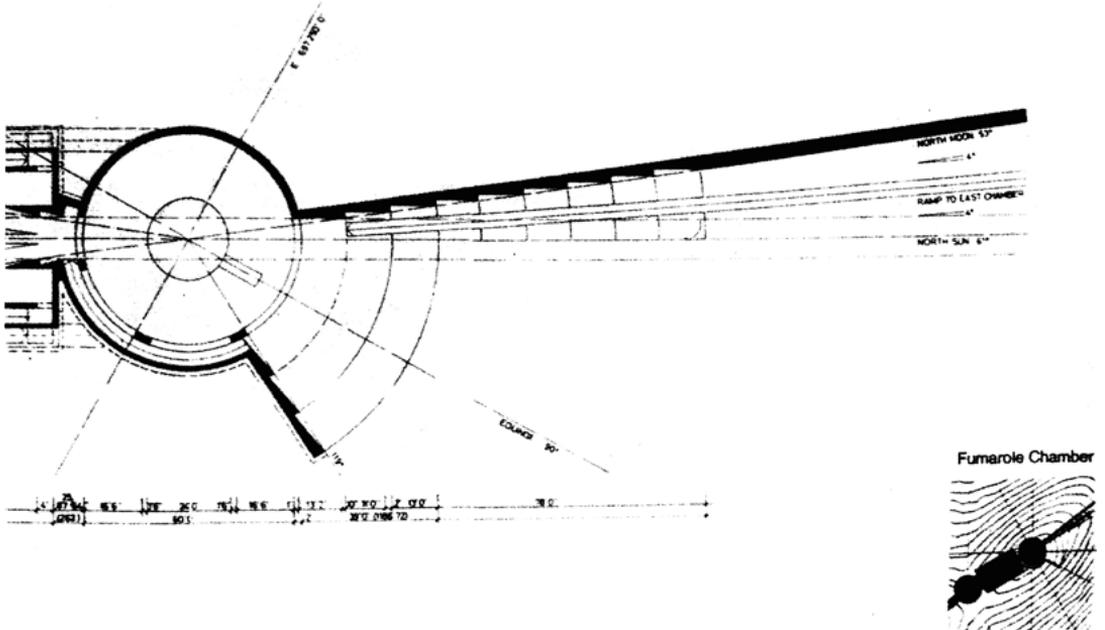
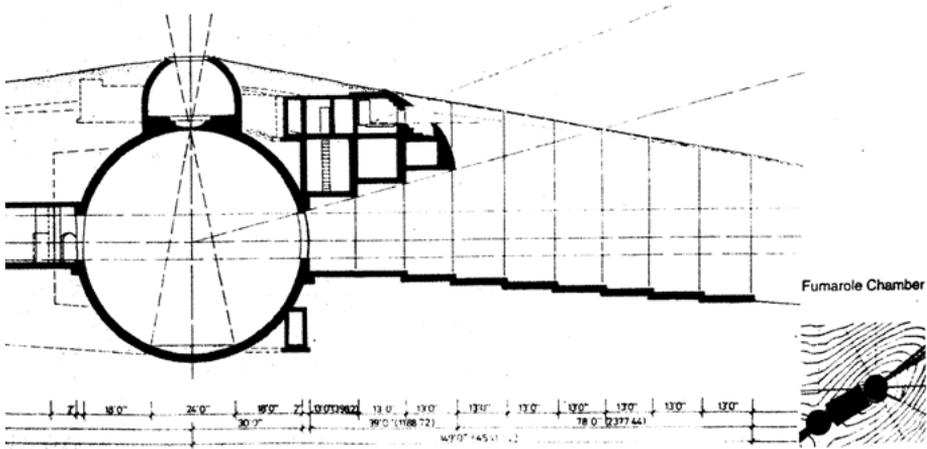
77. James Turrell,
Roden Crater plan,
1992

next page
78. James Turrell,
Roden Crater
East Portal





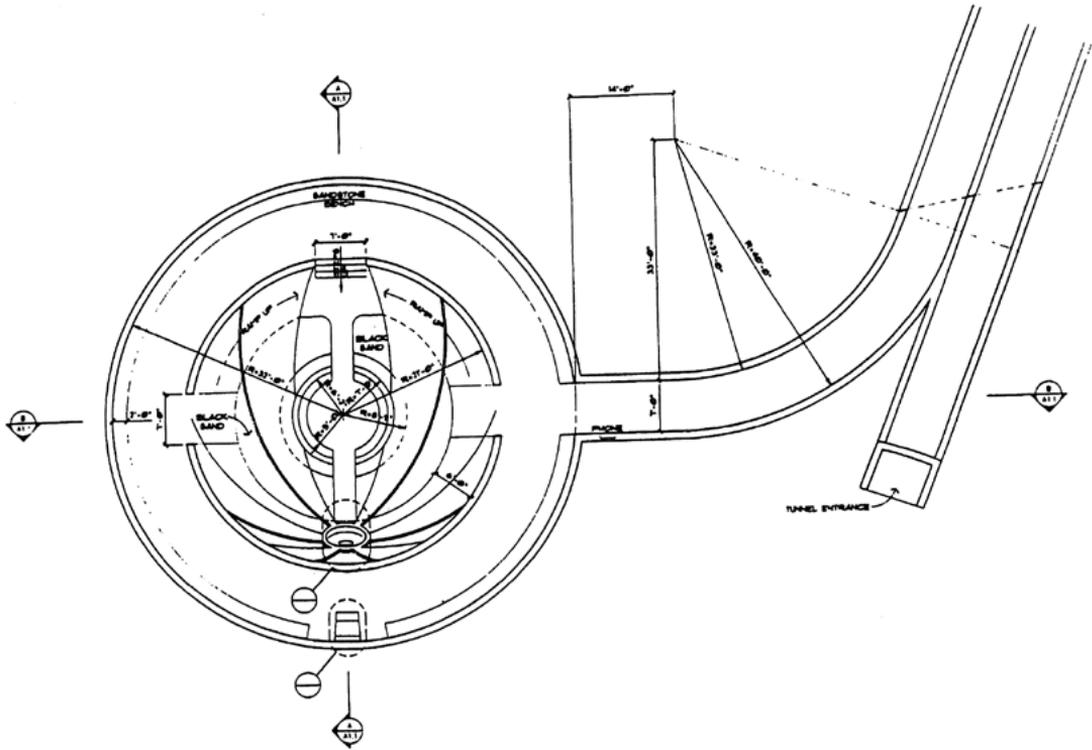




79. James Turrell,
Roden Crater Alpha
(East) Tunnel

80. James Turrell,
Roden Crater
Fumarole Space
(section and plan),
1996

3. SEEKING THE SPACE OF THE SPIRIT



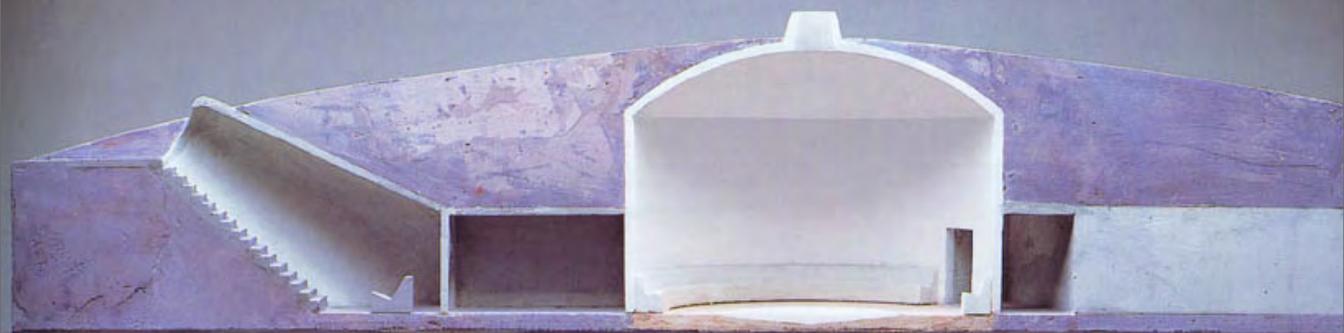
81. James Turrell,
*Roden Crater South
Space (plan),
1998*

82. James Turrell,
Roden Crater

next page
83. James Turrell,
*Roden Crater South
Space (model)*

84. James Turrell,
*Roden Crater North
Space (model)*





IRISH SKY GARDEN (1991, J. TURRELL)

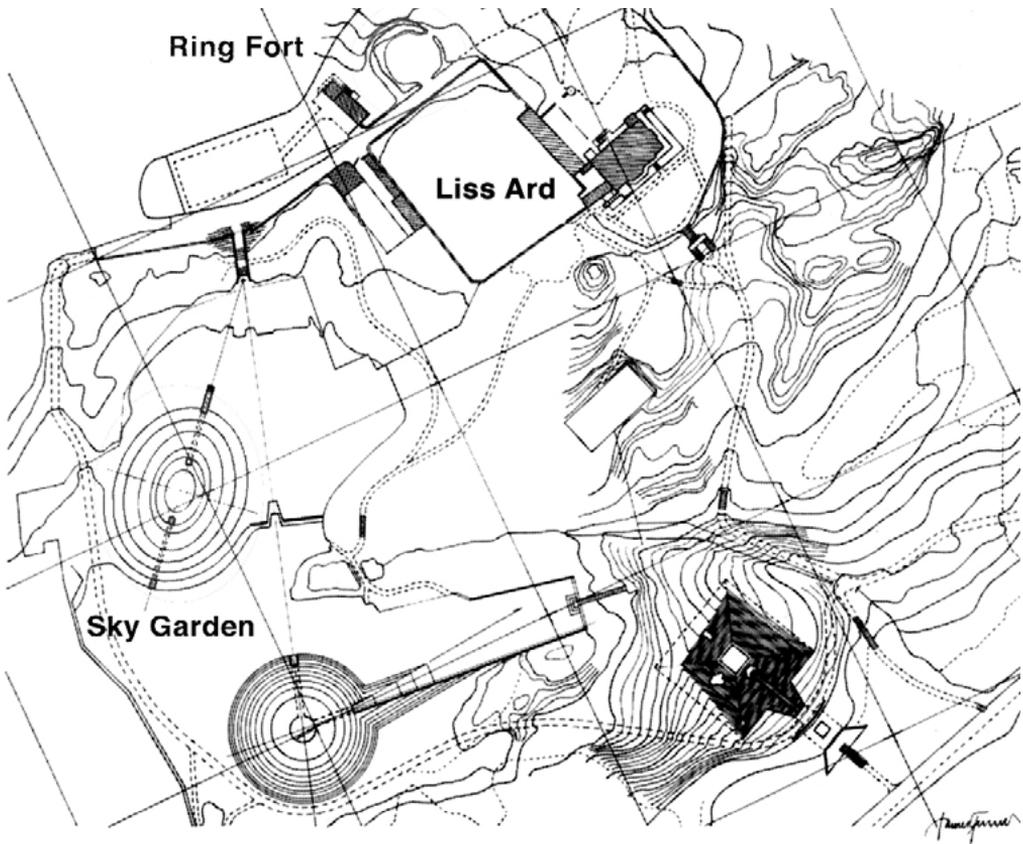
Designed in 1991 for the Liss Ard Estate, in Ireland¹²⁶, this project has been realized just in one of the four architectural structures expected. The project imagined the creation of the four structures, an elliptical crater, a mound, a pyramid and a yard-like enclosure inserted in the natural land form of the site. Around the structure a series of walls, ramps and staircase permit the movement between one area and the other, suggesting directions but leaving free to chose how to move in the space. As other projects of James Turrell, the four spaces are meant to be “observatories” of the celestial vault: it is visible in its dome-shape from the elliptical crater, more flat in the other spaces, until the pyramid that works like a *Skyspace*, with the sky perceived as flat, and the space enclosed¹²⁷.

85. James Turrell,
Irish Sky Garden,
1991.
Skibbereen,
Ireland



next page
86. James Turrell,
Irish Sky Garden
(plan)

87. James Turrell,
Irish Sky Garden
(bird view)



SALLE DES DÉPARTS (1996, E. SPALLETTI)

Ettore Spalletti transformed the space of the mortuary of the Raymond Poincaré Hospital in Garches, France, creating a place able to accompany the moment of the death. He decided to not use symbols, as the place should be used by families from different cultures and religion, but he focused on the symbolic value of the space, of the colour, of the elements. The architecture of the place (dating 1935) has been preserved and Spalletti transformed few rooms of it, in a path that culminates in the Salle des départs. This is a room 9,5 meters large and 5,25 meters high¹²⁸, that ends in three vaulted spaces where the dead body are placed. All the space is painted in a light blue colour, that invites to the depth and to the silence¹²⁹, while on the wall are hanged four light pink panels. The treatment of the walls and floors reinforce the perception of the pure geometries of the space. In the centre of the room is present a fountain, as the water is a universal symbol of purification, that has inside a black marble sculpture of a group of houses, suggesting the passage to the place of the deads. All the objects appears suspended in the space, that so becomes trascendental¹³⁰.



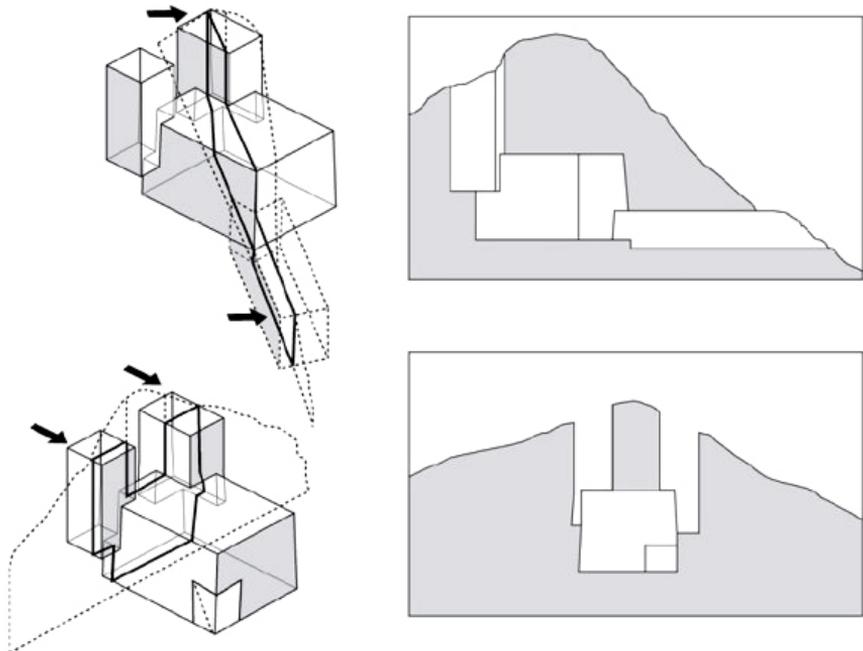
88, 89, 90. Ettore Spalletti, *Salle des départs*, 1996. Garches, France



MONUMENT TO TOLERANCE (FROM 1994, E. CHILLIDA)

This project that started in 1985 and found a site in the Tindaya mountain in the island of Fuerteventura in 1994, but has not been realized yet after many debates and environmental concerns and after the death of the artist in 2002¹³¹.

It is a huge cubic space carved inside the mountain (45x50x65 meters¹³²) with two skylights in the corners that project a “square” light, due to their long section in the mount excavation. The cave is reached through a tunnel of 80 meters, with a square section of 15 meters.



91. *Monument to tolerance* (axonometric schemes)

92. Eduardo Chillida, *Monument to tolerance*



NOTES CHAPTER 3

1 Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Human, all Too Human, I* [Menschliches, Allzumenschliches.], ed. Gary J. Handwerk, Vol. 3 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 145-146.

2 Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life Translated from the French*, ed. Joseph Ward Swain (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964), 327-333.

3 Margaret M. Miles, "Birds Around the Temple: Constructing a Sacred Environment," in *Valuing Landscape in Classical Antiquity: Natural Environment and Cultural Imagination*, eds. Jeremy McNerney and I. Sluiter (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2016), 170-176.

4 Ibid., 157

5 Ibid., 170

6 Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel : Volume 1: Social Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), 274.

7 Miles, *Birds Around the Temple: Constructing a Sacred Environment*, 160

8 Ibid., 152

9 de Vaux, *Ancient Israel : Volume 1: Social Institutions*, 277-281

10 Miles, *Birds Around the Temple: Constructing a Sacred Environment*, 158

11 Ibid., 184-185

12 George L. Hersey, *The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture: Speculations on Ornament from Vitruvius to Venturi* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 43.

13 G. Hersey points out a connection between the ancient Greek rituals, in which the parts of the body of the sacrificed animal used to be recreated on the altar after being torn apart and the building of temples. In fact their architectural elements have names that in ancient Greek recall parts of animal bodies. This link suggests that the building of temples could have taken the place of the sacrificial rituals, preserving all the sacred value related to. Ibid., 11-42

14 Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth [1972]* [Homo necans.] (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 39.

15 As suggested by M. Eliade, all the acts of foundation represents "repetitions of a primordial act, the transformation of chaos into cosmos by the

divine act of creation.” Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane; the Nature of Religion* [Sacré et le profane.], American ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 29-32. and it has a strong relation with the sacrifice, starting from the archetypical building of the “house” Ibid., 54-58

16 Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* [1972], 37

17 de Vaux, *Ancient Israel : Volume 1: Social Institutions*, 275

18 Hersey, *The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture: Speculations on Ornament from Vitruvius to Venturi*, 44

19 William Smith, William Wayte and G. E. Marindin, *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, 3d , rev and enl ed. (London: J. Murray, 1890; 1891).

20 Titus Livius and Emilio Piccolo, *Ab Urbe Condita* (Napoli: Senecio, 2009), 11.

21 Hersey, *The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture: Speculations on Ornament from Vitruvius to Venturi*, 54

22 See chapter 2.B

23 Rudolf Otto, *Il Sacro*, ed. Ernesto Buonaiuti, trans. Ernesto Buonaiuti (Milano: SE, 2009), 28-33.,

24 de Vaux, *Ancient Israel : Volume 1: Social Institutions*, 322

25 Georg A. Barton, "Temple of Solomon," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12 (New York : London: Funk & Wagnalls company, 1906), 101.

26 Ibid., 101

27 de Vaux, *Ancient Israel : Volume 1: Social Institutions*, 314-315

28 Ibid., 326

29 Georg A. Barton, "Temple of Herod," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12 (New York : London: Funk & Wagnalls company, 1906), 85.

30 Ibid., 86

31 Ibid., 88-89

32 *Ibid.*, 85

33 Joseph Jacobs and Judah David Eisentstein, "Temple in Rabbinical Literature," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12 (New York : London: Funk &

Wagnalls company, 1906), 96.

34 Morris Jastrow Jr. and Max L. Maroglis, "Atonement, Day of," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2 (New York : London: Funk & Wagnalls company, 1906), 284-286.

35 "Tzarich Iyun: The Kohen Gadol's Rope," , accessed 01/03, 2017, https://www.ou.org/torah/machshava/tzarich-iyun/tzarich_iyun_the_kohen_gadols_rope/.

36 *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. E. van Donzel, Vol. 6 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 144-145.

37 F. E. Peters, *Jerusalem and Mecca: The Typology of the Holy City in the Near East*, Vol. 11 (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 6.

38 *Ibid.*, 104

39 *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 146

40 Peters, *Jerusalem and Mecca: The Typology of the Holy City in the Near East*, 9

41 *Ibid.*, 5, 68, 109

42 *Ibid.*, 5, 68, 111

43 *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 161

44 Peters, *Jerusalem and Mecca: The Typology of the Holy City in the Near East*, 5, 68, 110, These structures included also the arched-shaped gate called Banu Shayba, that used to mark the entrance to the *mataf*, the paved area around the Ka'ba

45 *Ibid.*, 5, 68, 112-113, the only main change is the fact that nowadays has just one entrance door, while at that time there were two

46 *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. 4 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 317.

47 *Ibid.*, 317

48 *Ibid.*, 317

49 The conversation with Father Dall'Asta took place in Milano, on the 23rd of december 2016, but I didn't get the authorization to publish the text, that is so not included in the appendix A

50 Webster T. Patterson, *Sacred Sites: Christian Perspectives on the Holy Land* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 47.

51 Charles Coüasnon, *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem ... Translated from the ... French by J.-P. B. and Claude Ross*, eds. Claude ROSS and J. P. B. ROSS (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1974), 28.

52 *Ibid.*, 21 and Patterson, *Sacred Sites: Christian Perspectives on the Holy Land*, 49

53 Coüasnon, *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem ... Translated*

from the ... French by J.-P. B. and Claude Ross, 21 and Patterson, *Sacred Sites: Christian Perspectives on the Holy Land*, 49

54 See the reconstruction drawings)

55 Peter W. L. Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places? : Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Fourth Century* (Clarendon, 1990), 251.

56 *Ibid.*, 273

57 Patterson, *Sacred Sites: Christian Perspectives on the Holy Land*, 50

58 At the end of the IV c. the was for sure covered by a building Coüasnon, *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem ... Translated from the ... French by J.-P. B. and Claude Ross*, 23

59 Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places? : Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Fourth Century*, 251

60 Coüasnon, *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem ... Translated from the ... French by J.-P. B. and Claude Ross*, 24-35

61 The circular shape is not closed, as probably result of the building of the 4th-century., and also the position of the tomb aedicule, not perfectly centred, affects the shape

62 Coüasnon compare its shape and monumental character to the Roman mausoleums, like the one of the Empress Helena in Roma *Ibid.*, 35

63 Patterson, *Sacred Sites: Christian Perspectives on the Holy Land*, 50

64 "The important thing, of course, is not to be practitioners but to be artists and that is to be able to interpret the religious "as if." Anyway, history teaches that few saints (Fra Angelico) have been known to be great artists but there was more than one unbeliever (or a believer in his own way) (almost all the artists of the Renaissance) capable of performing "the miracle" of making a masterpiece of religious art" Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Il Metodo Di Le Corbusier e La Forma Della "Chapelle De Ronchamp"," *Casabella-Continuità* 207 (10/55, 1955).

65 "In architecture any problem can be (dis)solved". Rogers reports this quote that has been told him by Gropius and Le Corbusier, both Behrens's apprentices, in *Ibid.*

66 Crippa Maria Antonietta and Caussé Françoise, *Le Corbusier, Ronchamp La Cappella Di Notre-Dame Du Haut* [Ronchamp\$9IT\ICCU\CFI\0908173] (Milano: Jaca book, 2014), 201-213.

67 Rogers, *Il Metodo Di Le Corbusier e La Forma Della "Chapelle De Ronchamp"*

68 Giulio Carlo Argan and Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Dibattito Su Alcuni Argomenti Morali Dell'Architettura," *Casabella-Continuità* 209 (02/56, 1956).

69 "Then the church will be a place of assembly and, even, of reflection,

not a mean to encourage and incite ecstasy with the assistance of well-calculated lighting effects and spectacular perspectives of plans and volumes" Ibid.

70 Le Corbusier, "La Chiesa Di "Notre Dame Du Haut" a Ronchamp," *Casabella-Continuità* 207 (10/55, 1955).

71 "I wanted to create a place of silence, of prayer, of inner joy. The feeling of the sacred animated our effort." Ibid.

72 See chapter 3.A

73 Aldo Rossi, "Il Convento De La Tourette Di Le Corbusier," *Casabella-Continuità* 246 (12/60, 1960).

74 Giancarlo De Carlo and Ernesto Nathan Rogers, "Discussione Sulla Valutazione Storica Dell'Architettura e Sulla Misura Umana," *Casabella-Continuità* 210 (06/56, 1956).

75 Crippa and Caussé, *Le Corbusier, Ronchamp La Cappella Di Notre-Dame Du Haut*, 206-207

76 Robert McCarter, *Louis I. Kahn* (London ; New York: Phaidon, 2005), 416.

77 Ibid., 417

78 Kent Larson, *Louis I. Kahn: Unbuilt Masterworks* (New York, NY: Monacelli Press, 2000), 147.

79 Ibid., 161-

80 Emre Arolat Architecture, "Sancaklar Mosque," *Area n. 147*, 2016, 40-47.

81 Sergio Los and Klaus Frahm, *Carlo Scarpa* (Koln:: Taschen, 2002), 131.

82 Yutaka Saito, *Carlo Scarpa* [Kenchiku no shijin Karuro Sukarupa / Yutaka Saito.] (Tokyo: TOTO Shuppan, 1997), 19.

83 Los and Frahm, *Carlo Scarpa*, 131

84 Ibid., 132

85 Saito, *Carlo Scarpa*, 20

86 Ibid., 16

87 Dominique de Ménéil, "The Rothko Chapel," *Art Journal* 30,3 (1971).

88 Ricciarda Belgiojoso, "Architettura, Arte e Musica," *Domus* 974 (11/13, 2013).

89 de Ménéil, *The Rothko Chapel*

90 Francesco Dal Co, *Tadao Ando, 1995-2010*, ed. Tadao Ando (Munich ; London: Prestel, 2010), 167.

91 Peter Zumthor, ed., *Peter Zumthor: Buildings and Projects 1985-2013*, Vol. 3 Verlag Scheidegger and Spiess, 2014), 122.

92 Ibid., 121

93 Ibid., 121

94 "Kuehn Malvezzi: House of Prayer and Learning," last modified 15/10/2012, <http://www.abitare.it/it/architettura/2012/10/15/kuehn-malvezzi-house-of-prayer-and-learning-berlin/>.

95 Ibid.

96 Superstudio, "Storyboard Per Il Film Sul Monumento Continuo," *Casabella* 358 (11/71, 1971).

97 Ibid.

98 Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art and Painting in Particular 1912* (Wittenborn, 1970), 33.

99 Wassily Kandinskij and Elena (edited by) Pontiggia, *Lo Spirituale Nell'Arte* (Milano: SE, 2005), 20-21.

100 Kandinsky suggests to avoid materialism in the contents of the artistic work, against for instance to the naturalism, but also in its general and high aim

101 Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art and Painting in Particular 1912*, 53

102 The abandon of the three-dimensionality on the canvas is for him the first step towards the abstract, but the need of enlarging the limited space of the canvas it is fundamental, and brings him to develop his theory about lines, shapes, colours and composition Kandinskij and Pontiggia, *Lo Spirituale Nell'Arte*, 75-76

103 Ibid., 48-49

104 Ibid., 59-71

105 Just to cite a couple of milestones, the work of Nietzsche and Freud, that put the bases of the contemporary moral philosophy and psychology

106 Also Kandinsky refers to the primitive forms when he writes: "a similarity of inner direction in an entire moral and spiritual milieu, a similarity of ideals, at first closely pursued but later lost to sight, a similarity of "inner mood" between one period and another, the logical consequence will be a revival of the external forms which served to express those insights in the earlier age. This may account partially for our sympathy and affinity with our comprehension of the work of primitives. Like ourselves, these pure artists sought to express only inner and essential feelings in their works; in this process they ignored as a matter of course the fortuitous." Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art and Painting in Particular 1912*, 23-24

107 Vincenzo Trione, "Fede Nell'Arte," *Corriere Della Sera* 10/02/2013, 2013.

108 It is an ambition expressed also by Kandinsky the need of reaching a unity of the arts when it comes to spirituality, in what he calls "monumental art" Kandinskij and Pontiggia, *Lo Spirituale Nell'Arte*, 39-40

109 P. M. Lee suggests a strong influence on Eliasson work by the movement Light and Space, that had in James Turrell one of the mayor exponents Pamela M. Lee, "Your Light and Space," in *Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson*, ed. Madeleine Grynsztejn (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007).

110 Name used by Ibid., 45

111 We can find here a "spiritual" link with the thoguhts of Otto, expressed in chapter 2.B

112 Gianni Mercurio and Demetrio Paparoni, *Anish Kapoor: Dirty Corner* (Milano: Skira, 2011), V.

113 Paolo Vagheggi, "Anish Kapoor Tra Krishna e San Gennaro," *La Repubblica*03/11/2003, 2003.

114 G. Mercurio and D. Paparoni refers to Kapoor's work as the "ability of sculpture to become one with space and generate silence around it"Mercurio and Paparoni, *Anish Kapoor: Dirty Corner*, VII

115 Interesting for example the work *Virga* (1974) in which the light is used to modify the perception of the geometry space, that at a first glance appears different from its real shape

116 J. Turrell, *Speaking for the light* in Michael Govan et al., *James Turrell: A Retrospective* (Los Angeles; New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art ;DelMonico Books, imprint of Prestel, 2013), 49.

117 He also wrote that "there's a sweet deliciousness to feeling yourself see something", linking to a similar point of view with the work of Olafur Eliasson Ibid., 13

118 See chapter 4.C for the description of one of them, in Jerusalem

119 Georges Didi-Huberman, "The Fable of the Place," in *James Turrell, the Other Horizon*, ed. Peter Noever (Ostfildern-Ruit; New York: Cantz, 2002), 50-51.

120 Olafur Eliasson, "Dear Everybody," in *Olafur Eliasson*, eds. Madeleine Grynsztejn, Daniel Birnbaum and Micheal SpeaksPhaidon, 2002).

121 Madeleine Grynsztejn, "(Y)our Entanglements: Olafur Eliasson, the Museum, and the Consumer Culture," in *Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson*, ed. Madeleine Grynsztejn (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 11-12.

122 Ibid., 11-12

123 The measures are taken from the website of the artist (<http://anishkapoor.com>)

124 Peter Noever, *James Turrell, the Other Horizon* (Ostfildern-Ruit; New York: Cantz, 2002), 12, 158-161.

125 Thought expressed by G. Didi-Huberman in Didi-Huberman, *The Fable of the Place*, 52

126 Noever, *James Turrell, the Other Horizon*, 185-186

127 Ibid., 185-186

128 Andrea Dall'Asta, "Ettore Spalletti: Salle Des Départs a Garches," *IN_ BO. Ricerche e Progetti Per Il Territorio, La Città e l'Architettura* (06/2012, 2012).

129 Interesting the link with Kandinsky's thought

130 Ibid.

131 Sofía Menéndez, "Renace La Montaña Sagrada De Chillida," *El País* 19/01/2011, 2011.

132 The measures are taken from the website of the engineering company (<http://arup.com>) Secum exceata tecepro ditis quam essumquod mo officтури int.

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CHAPTER 4 JERUSALEM AS A CASE STUDY

4.A _ JERUSALEM, A VERY SHORT
INTRODUCTION

4.B _ SELECTION AND PRINCIPLES OF THE
CASE STUDIES

4.C _ JERUSALEM'S SPACES OF THE SPIRIT



4.A _ JERUSALEM: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION

“In Eudoxia, which spreads both upward and down, with winding alleys, steps, dead ends, hovels, a carpet is preserved in which you can observe the city’s true form. At first sight nothing seems to resemble Eudoxia less than the design of that carpet, laid out in symmetrical motives whose patterns are repeated along straight and circular lines, interwoven with brilliantly colored spires, in a repetition that can be followed throughout the whole woof. But if you pause and examine it carefully, you become convinced that each place in the carpet corresponds to a place in the city and all the things contained in the city are included in the design, arranged according to their true relationship, which escapes your eye distracted by the bustle, the throngs, the shoving. [...]

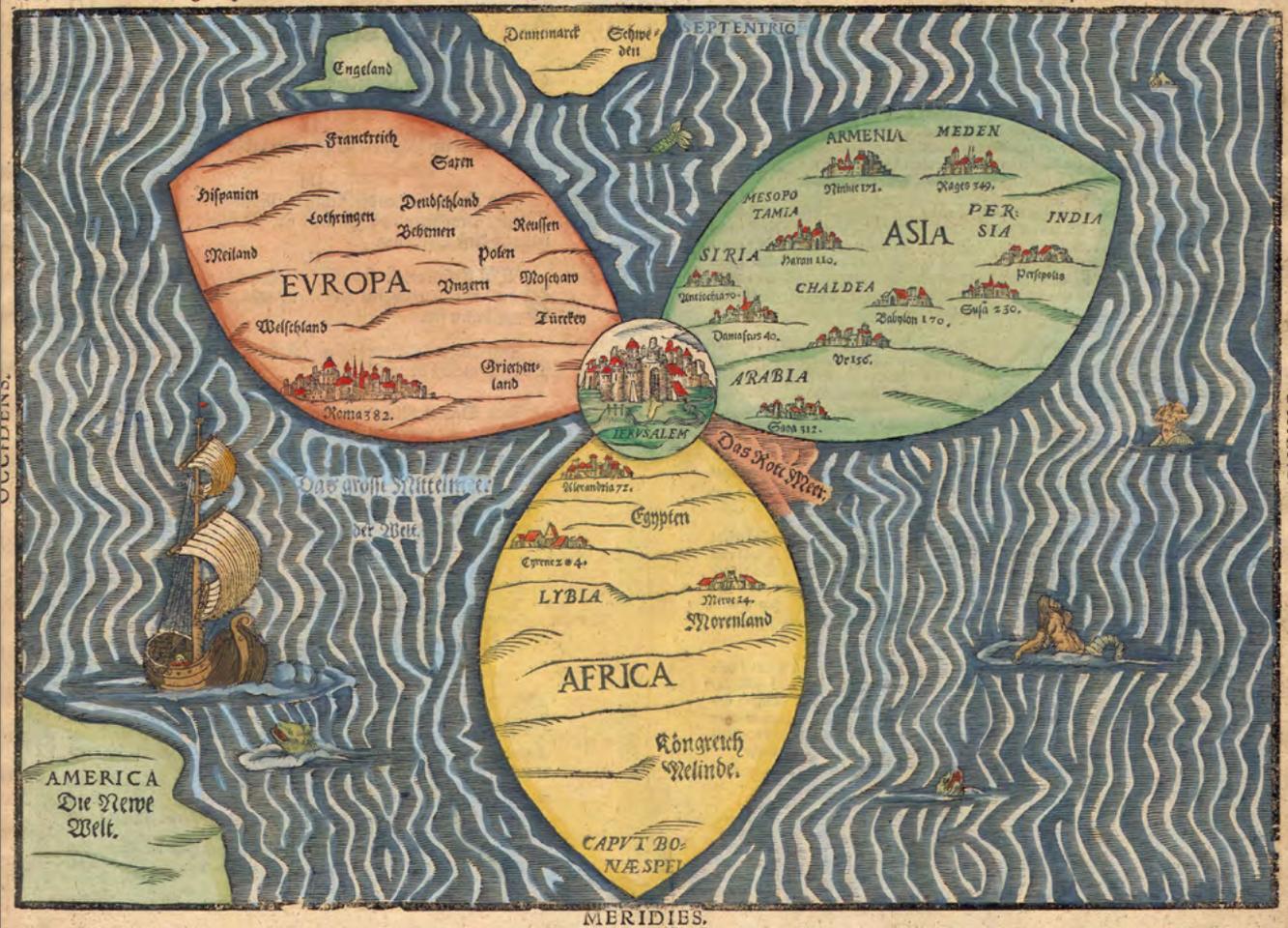
An oracle was questioned about the mysterious bond between two objects so dissimilar as the carpet and the city. One of the two objects-the oracle replied-has the form the gods gave the starry sky and the orbits in which the worlds revolve; the other is an approximate reflection, like every human creation. For some time the augurs had been sure that the carpet’s harmonious pattern was of divine origin. The oracle was interpreted in this sense, arousing no controversy. But you could, similarly, come to the opposite conclusion: that the true map of the universe is the city of Eudoxia, just as it is, a stain that spreads out shapelessly, with crooked streets, houses that crumble one upon the other amid clouds of dust, fires, screams in the darkness.”

Italo Calvino¹

In order to proceed in this architectural trip through spirituality, it is relevant to have a short introduction to the city of Jerusalem, that represents the background of this research and the context of the project.

Jerusalem is settled on a territory that misses completely the physical features which favoured the prosperity of many other important cities in the world, such as water presence, trade routes, mineral resources, to the point that archaeologists and historians still have long debated about why Jerusalem should have been established where it was and why it should have become great². In spite of this it has become the fundamental centre of the three main monotheistic religions and an incredible cross-road of cultures, hinge point between East and West, being represented in many occasions as the centre of the world³.

Jerusalem’s concentration of cultures, religions, populations is the result of a



93. Heinrich Bünting, *Die ganze Welt in einem Kleeblatt* (*The World in a Cloverleaf*), 1581

history of four-five millennia, that saw the alternation of many different rulers above the city. But, despite this long history, the last one hundred years have deeply affected the actual shape of the city and its social composition, giving form to the actual Jerusalem, focal point of this research. Until the middle of the 19th-century nobody lived outside the walls⁴ and in 1800 the population was of 8750 inhabitants (2000 Jewish, 2750 Christians and 4000 Muslims)⁵. Nowadays the Old City, enclosed by the walls, still represent a core for the city, but many other centres have been created and the expansion of the city moved its borders far away.

The first settlement dated back to the beginning of the 3rd millennium B.C. but written documents appear just one thousands years later⁶. Around 1000 B.C. Jerusalem became the capital of the kingdom of the Jewish king David, that unified the Hebrew tribes and found in Jerusalem a good position of balance between the North and South⁷. The capital role of Jerusalem last until the Babylonian conquest



94. James Francis Hurley,
Aerial view of Jerusalem,
ca. 1917

of the city, when the Solomon's Temple was destroyed and the Jews deported (587 B.C.)⁸.

In the following two thousand years, Jerusalem was ruled again by the Jews (from 537 B.C.), by Alexander the Great and the successors Hellenistic kings (332-167 B.C.), by the Maccabees (167-63 B.C.), by the Romans and then the Byzantine Empire (63 B.C. – 638 A.D.), by the Muslims caliphs (638 – 1099), by the Crusaders (1099 – 1187 and then 1229 - 1244 after the ruling of Saladin), by the Mamelukes (1250 – 1517), until the Ottoman empire conquered the city in 1517.

Starting from the second half of the 19th-century, a growing number of Jews, under the impulse of the newborn Zionist movement⁹, started to move to Palestine and the Jewish population of Jerusalem passed from 2000 units in 1800 to 45000 in 1910¹⁰. At the same time, starting from the first half of 19th-century, the British consul got specific instructions by his government to make it his official duty to take care for the welfare of the Jews in Palestine¹¹.

The Ottoman administration lasted for four centuries, until World War I,

when, at the end of 1917, the British army conquered this land and Jerusalem, obtaining then in 1920 the Mandate from the League of Nations. The expulsion of the Ottomans from this land opened the ambitions of Jews and Arabs (oppressed in the same way by the Turks)¹² of a own national state.

On November 1917 a letter of the Foreign Secretary A.J.Balfour, in which he promised to use the British's influence to establish a "National Home in Palestine" for the Jews, was made public by the British Government¹³. In the following years a growing number of riots, murders and terrorist attacks started to shake Jerusalem, the first noteworthy in March-April 1920, when the Arabs rose up against the declaration of the British Government of the will to carry out the Balfour Declaration¹⁴. In the meanwhile the Jews created a paramilitary organization, the *Haganah*, to protect themselves and in the follow years also the terrorist groups of *IZL* and *Stern Gang* arose. In the most violent period before WWII, between 1936 and 1939, were killed 500 Jews, 150 Britons and 3000 Arabs (at least 1000 by their fellows because they supported a compromise)¹⁵.

The years of the British Mandate saw the creation of many important infrastructures, the establishing of the *status quo* on the religious buildings of Jerusalem, with the free access for everybody to every building (except for the Jews on the Temple Mount) and the first proposal of a creation of two states to face the growing violences¹⁶. In 1918 was also promulgated an ordinance for Jerusalem, valid till nowadays, that imposed a strong control over the renovations of building and over the new constructions, forbidding the use for the facades of stucco, iron, concrete and wood, giving to the building the Jerusalem's stone facades that characterize completely the city¹⁷.

The tensions in Jerusalem growth exponentially from both sides towards the end of the Mandate and after the UN resolution of 29th of November 1947 for the creation of two states with Jerusalem under international control. At that time the population of the city was composed by 99320 Jews and 65000 Arabs (Christians and Muslims)¹⁸. The violences led the inhabitants of the city living in areas dangerous to leave their houses, creating a West Jerusalem completely Jewish and an East Jerusalem completely Arab, except for the area of Mount Scopus, in East Jerusalem, that during the Mandate started to host the main university and hospital of the city. The inhabitants of the Jewish quarter of the Old City started to be completely isolated.

With the end of the Mandate and the declaration of independence of the newborn Israeli state (14th of May, 1948), six Arabs army of the surrounding states attacked Israel, starting the first Arab-Israeli war. The fights in Jerusalem led to the Israeli control over the Western part of the city and the Jordanian

control over the Eastern part. The 1300 inhabitants of the Jewish quarter of the Old City left their homes after the short cease-fire of the 28th of May, finding residence in the neighbourhoods of Katamon, Bakka and Talbiyeh, previously left by the Arabs¹⁹.

The armistice between Israel and Jordan (3rd of April, 1949) ended the war and Jerusalem was divided in two part by the so-called Green Line, that included many no-man's lands and the UN observatory on the site of the previous British Governor's Palace, in the South neighbourhood of East Talpyot. The idea of internationalization of the city was rejected by both sides, with just a Israeli proposal (denied) of a partial internationalization (Old City and 6,5% of the municipality), in order to guarantee the access for the Jews to the Western Wall²⁰.

On December 1949 Jerusalem was proclaimed capital of Israel. In the following two decades West Jerusalem registered a great development, with also the creation of a new main hospital and a new campus for the Hebrew University, at the time isolated by the Jordan's control.

The division of the city ended in 1967, with the Six Days War. After just three days of fighting, on the 7th of June, the East part of the city and the Old City were conquered by Israel. The reunification and the long administration of the mayor Teddy Kollek (1965-1993) brought to the resewing of the urban fabric, the improvement of infrastructures in East Jerusalem and the conservation of the *status quo* on the religious buildings²¹. However, after the first days of diffuse enthusiasm and energy from both sides of the city²², the situation of division and lack of trust came back and the possibility of having mixed neighbourhoods as before '48 haven't occurred till nowadays. The UN have never recognized the changes on the status of the city and tensions grew again: Arab terrorist attacks took place again from 1968 and Israel started to build new neighbourhoods beyond the previous Green Line, mainly on desert land that had no agricultural qualities, but in some cases also expropriating Arab properties and creating a "circle" of Jewish neighbourhoods around the Arab ones, promoting the immigration of many Jews from other countries.

From 1971 high-rise buildings started to change the skyline of the city and, after the first proposals of the end of the 60's, a masterplan for the city has never been adopted, with a urban fabric that still grows according to the temporary political interests, with neighbourhoods completely detached from the centre, based on car movement.

Between 1967 and 1979 the Arab population of the city increased from 60000 to 92000 inhabitants, while the Jewish one passed from 200000 to 250000²³. On July 1980 East Jerusalem was officially annexed in the Israeli borders, provoking



95. *Mandelbaum Gate
(on the Green Line),
Jerusalem*

international critics, the moving to Tel Aviv of thirteen embassies and the continuation of the violences from the Arab terrorists. At that time 12% of the city population was formed by Jews that in just 13 years moved to live beyond the Green Line²⁴.

In the last three decades the contrasts became even more violent, with the peaks in the First (1987-1992) and Second Intifada (2000-2005), the construction of many other neighbourhoods beyond the Green Line and the division of some parts of neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem by the high concrete wall that separates nowadays Israel from the West Bank.

The divisions of the city are far from being solved and terror attacks, even if less frequent than in the past, are still a threat. The last one took place just few weeks ago, on the 8th of January²⁵, few meters from the UN observatory. The future of Jerusalem city is still unclear, with proposals of going back to the division of 1967, proposals of creating a city under international control or of a unique capital for two states, proposals of keeping on developing the city in the same way, under Israeli control.

The value of the city remains high, and its role more then crucial for many many people, as the prime minister Rabin said in 1995:

“Jerusalem has a thousand faces and each one of us has his own Jerusalem”²⁶

4.B _ SELECTION AND PRINCIPLES OF THE CASE STUDIES

“Architecture is a thing of art, a phenomenon of the emotions, lying outside questions of construction and beyond them. The purpose of construction is to make things hold together; of architecture to move us. Architectural emotion exists when the work rings within us in tune with a universe whose laws we obey, recognise and respect. When certain harmonies have been attained, the work captures us. Architecture is a matter of “harmonies”, it is “a pure creation of the spirit ”

Le Corbusier²⁷

Selecting a reduced group of spiritual spaces in Jerusalem it is not a simple task. The city and its surroundings showed over the history an impressive accumulation of shrines, synagogues, monasteries, churches, mosques, funerary architectures and, in the last century, also many memorials and museum, whose spaces are often interesting for the purpose of this research. Above all of them, the natural landscape of Jerusalem is often rich of spiritual atmospheres and spaces, able to accompany the human creations, or, in many cases, to be self-sufficient.

In order to get out from this intricate ground, I made a first selection considering a very wide number of architectures and places all around Israel and surroundings. It represented in any case a partial and subjective group, that I drafted going around, speaking with local people that I had the opportunity to meet and know, searching online and using the documentary books by David Kroyanker²⁸.

After this first selection, that contained around forty buildings, I decided to shrink it and focused on Jerusalem (and in few cases its surroundings). This city represents alone a good sample of all the different historical phases, cultures and architectures. At the same time Jerusalem is the ground of the architectural proposal and its landscape (physical and figurative) is the background to confront with.

I visited the places selected, I explored their atmospheres spending time

96. *St George monastery*, 2016. Wadi Kelt, West Bank



in them and through the photographic mean and I further shrink the choice to the sites that I found more interesting and relevant for the purpose of this research. I tried to keep a balance between the different typologies, cultures and faiths (in the case of religious buildings), in order to achieve the widest but most synthetic cross-section as possible. The chronological variety, on the other hand, has not been considered as a criteria, the focus of this analysis is on the spatial-architectural features valid for the present (and hopefully for the future). This focus is necessarily from my subjective point of view, that tries to investigate the universal, from a individual and personal perspective.

Every site has been analysed according to some criteria, shared along all the group selected. In this way it is possible to confront and compare affinities and differences, in the attempt to extract principles and elements as much universal as possible. Starting from the particular to the general, the aim is to establish a communication with the other results coming from the theoretical research done so far.

In many cases the buildings are religious sites, but is not always like this. Selecting religious sites has not been easy, for the many concerning about them, and for the fact that not all the religious buildings are fitting this research: Muslim buildings in many cases are not accessible, except by worshippers, and synagogues (Jerusalem is really full of them) are often simple rooms in the ground floor of residential buildings, that serve the function and the meaning of gathering together and pray, but whose atmosphere and space have little to do with the direction of this work²⁹.

The criteria used are as well partially subjective, deriving from the intuition coming from the research done and from the needs of the project, that has been designed simultaneously. Moving from Le Corbusier's quote, they are focused on the experience of the space rather than on the function of it. The function is taken into account to explain the reason why some characteristics are present and are developed in a certain way, but it is not central. Even when some features derive from a specific need, they are then considered for their sensory reflect and their implicit meaning.

The position in the city is taken into account to understand which kind of itinerary is necessary to reach the site, as well as for the perception of the place, in some case isolated, in other integrated in the urban factory. The accesses to the building and the movement between its different parts are then fundamental



97. *Nabi Musa*,
2017.
Judean desert,
West Bank

to understand the passages between different spaces, and the role played by the thresholds³⁰.

Proportions (and dimensions), materials, light and sound is what define the space itself. These criteria are studied in every site from a descriptive point of view, resulting from the survey, and through graphic and photographic means. Plans and sections are the main tools to investigate dimensions and proportions, as well as the light factor. Not for all the buildings considered I managed to provide drawings, so few of them are described just through words and photography.

Finally, the order in which the spaces are presented follows the order in which I visited them, where some principles of “equilibrium” between the different historical times and cultural origin left the space to schedule necessities, possibility to reach the site, weather conditions and so on.

This analysis of Jerusalem’s spaces that I consider “spiritual” (and in many cases not just me) concludes this “architectural trip through spirituality” and provides other principles and elements for in the design solution. In chapter 5, these principles and elements will be collected and summarized, giving an overview over this research, that moved between philosophy, religion, art, architecture and beyond all of them, where it is hopefully possible to link them all in something that can’t be expressed but just experienced, in a place, real or metaphoric.



4.B _ JERUSALEM'S SPACES OF THE SPIRIT

ETHIOPIAN ORTODOX CHURCH (KIDANÄ MEHERÄT)

The church of Kidanä Mehrät is part of the Däbrä Gännät Ethiopian Orthodox monastery and was completed in 1893³¹. Nowadays it is in the city centre, surrounded by the urban fabric. The access is provided by the tiny Ethiopia street.

In the end of the 19th century this area was empty, as the city was still enclosed by the walls (monasteries were anyway built out of them), but in the beginning of the 20th century it started to develop, with religious and consulates buildings³².



The space (dimensions and proportions)

The church is a round central plan building, inserted in a courtyard, where it represents the focal element, occupying the major part of its space. Detailed surveys of this building have not been found, so just few measures of the building can be deduced: its diameter is 22 meters³³ and its height the same, so the building can be included in a cube.

To better understand this building, a short study of the Ethiopian Orthodox church tradition led to the knowledge that this is a very traditional typology, when the church is inserted in a courtyard. The interior is divided in concentric spaces: an outer ring ambulatory (*debteras*), a middle ring (*qeddest*) and the sanctuary (*maqdas*): the latter is the holiest place, that has three entrances (west, north and south), contains the altar and it is reserved to the clergy³⁴. The sanctuary is built as an aedicule, placed in the centre of the building, under the dome. The structure of the different rings is visible also from the outside, as they have a different roof height.

Access and movement

From Ethiopia street a arched gate leads to the courtyard where the church is placed. This movement is from west to east and introduce to the contrast between the rectangular courtyard and the round building.

98. *Ethiopian Orthodox church*, 2016. Jerusalem



99. The central space and the aedicule

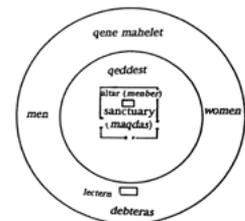
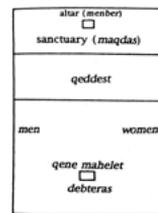
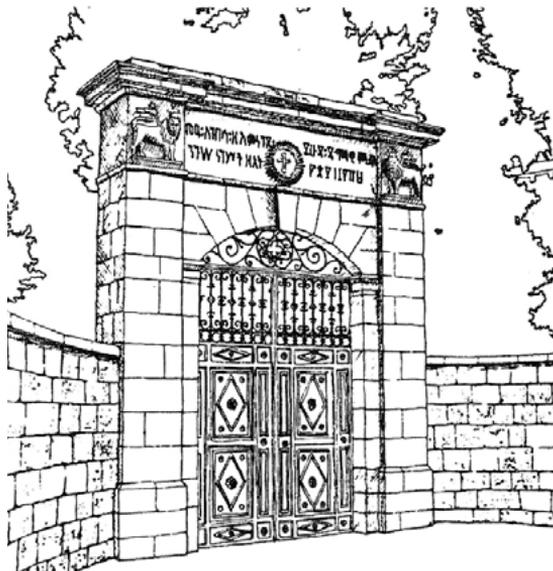
100. The ring space

The first think that stands out is that the access to the church itself is not aligned with this gate, while a blind wall stands in front of the entrance. To enter the church it is necessary to walk around the circular facade and find one of the three entrances, five steps higher than the courtyard level. After reaching this podium, it is required to take out the shoes to enter the building, as the floor inside is completely covered by carpets.

The movement inside the building follows its shape, through the ring ambulatory that permits to circulate around the sanctuary. One portion of the

101. Michal Horovitz, *The gate on Ethiopia street*, 1991

102. Schemes of rectangular and round shaped Ethiopian churches



next page
103. *A man praying*, 2016. Jerusalem



ring is separated by two thresholds, through doors, left open. The space between the ring and the squared sanctuary, permits to create a place to stop and where the religious functions take place.

Light

The lighting of the space is provided by vertical arched windows that run all around the circulation space, providing a cross light to it. This openings are placed in couples, where one is a proper window and the other is a stone surface with many small openings. Moreover, the core of the church is lighted by smaller windows on the tambour that sustains the dome. Since the core is almost completely occupied by the aedicule, the top windows have the function of lighten the dome and part of the aedicule itself, providing also an additional soft transversal light to the ring space.

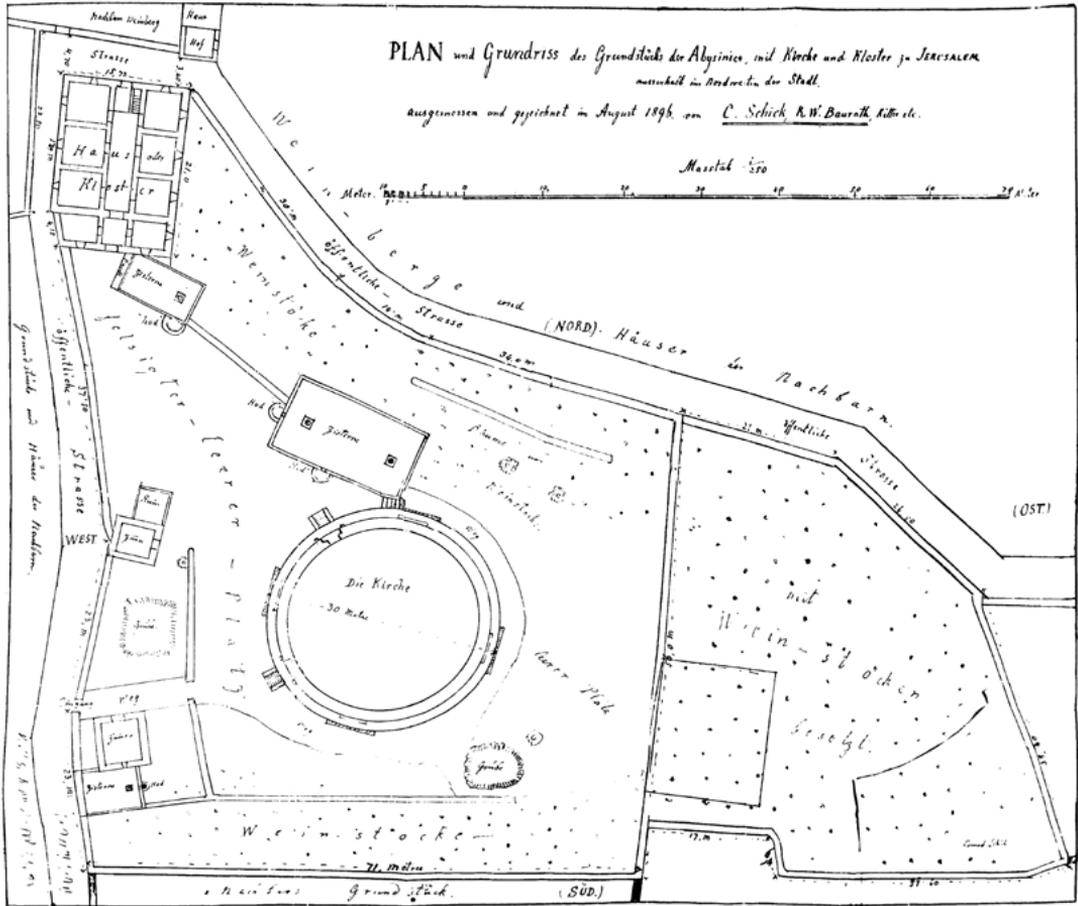
Sound

The sound in the interior of the church is soften by the presence of the carpets. On the other hand the fact the space is continuous permits to hear all the sounds, such as the bells that mark the times during the praying.

Materials

The outside of the building is covered with the typical Jerusalem's stone, that gives the character to the building and create a contrast with the vegetation elements present in the courtyard. The stone is used both for the wall and for all the ornaments of the round facade, creating a monolithic impression, despite the great number of different elements. Above the wooden doors, a small figure is painted with a light blue colour. The dome is covered with a metal coating (probably copper), that gives a dark grey-green aspect to it.

The inside is characterized by the colours, of the many carpets and of the wall, painted in blue and pink. The interior of the dome is prevalent white, with figures painted on it. Many curtains are present, both to cover the sanctuary and on the windows. The sanctuary itself presents many elements in stone, such as semi-columns and arches.



104. Herr Baurath von Schick, Plan of the Dabrä Gännät monastery (some differences from the nowadays state are present), 1896



HARAM AL-SHARIF / TEMPLE MOUNT

This is not a building but a large area, that occupied a vast portion in the South-East of the Old City. It is the esplanade of the ruin of Herod's temple, now occupied by many Muslim religious buildings, that have been built starting from the 7th-century³⁵. They include the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa mosque, and many other smaller structures. Nowadays it is forbidden for non-Muslim people to visit the two main buildings, and the access to the area is allowed only in few "tourist" hours, changing considerably the perception of this place.



The space (dimensions and proportions)

The area measure approximately 270 by 450 meters and on the eastern and southern sides is enclosed by the Old City's walls (towards the area of Mount of Olives). On the western and northern sides a group of building, that form a wall, separates the compound from the Old City itself. The western one is characterized by porches.

The main presence is the podium that support the Dome of the Rock, placed higher than the rest of the area (around 3,5 meters). The measures of the podium, that is not perfectly rectangular, are approximately 135 by 150 meters.

All around the area there are many small buildings, including a cemetery, the Golden Gate (on the eastern wall, closed now) and few round central plan elements, some enclosed by walls, some open with columns.

The Dome of the Rock building, almost in the centre of the area, has an octagonal base and which is placed the tambour and the dome itself. The octagonal base has a diameter of approximately 40 meters (and height of 11) and the dome of 20 meters. The total height is around 30 meters.

The al-Aqsa mosque, attached to the southern wall, has a dimension of roughly 45 by 60 meters and a height, on the top of its dome of 25 meters,

The big dimensions of the site give a strong impression of emptiness, of void.

105. *Haram al-Sharif*
2016.
Jerusalem

Access and movement

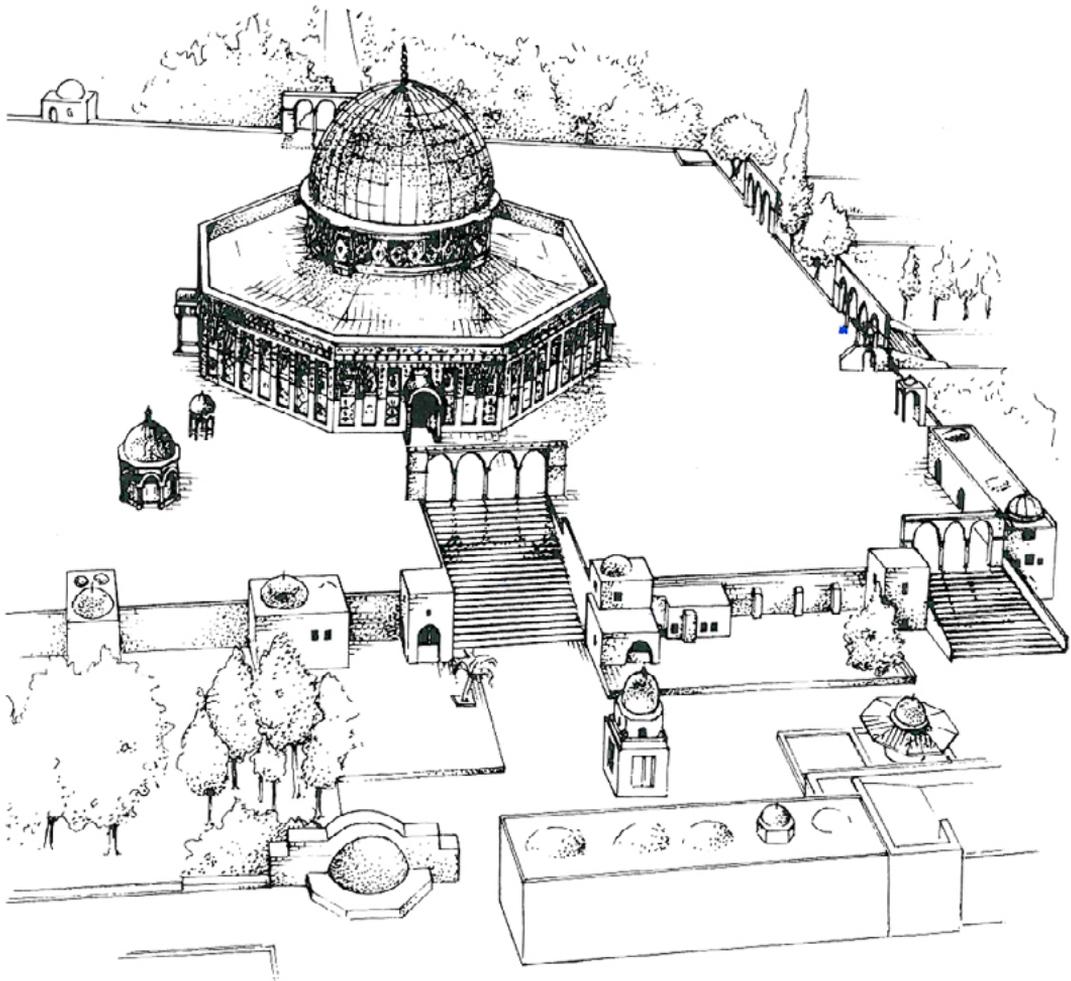
The access to the area takes place from the Old City itself, through eleven gates, on the northern and western sides. One of them (the one more southern one) is the only access for visitors (as the others are controlled by the police that let only Muslims to pass) and it is directly on the area of the Western Wall, the Jewish holiest site. As it is few meters higher than the level of the Wall esplanade, a wood bridge has been built to reach the gate and to control the accesses (limited on time).

106. The Zomet Institute,
Haram al-sharif/
Temple Mount (plan)

The movement inside the area is then very free, being just polarized by the various structures, even if the northern and eastern parts present few fields with olive trees and the movement is restricted to paved routes.

107. Yana Borstein,
Bird's-eye view of
the Dome of the
Rock podium,
1993

Also the access to the area occupied by the Dome of the Rock is possible from





108, 109. *Different types of structures present in the site*

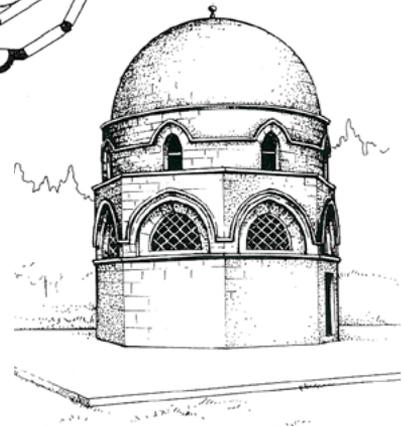
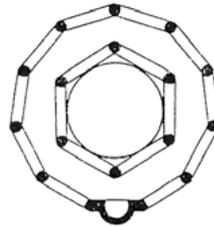
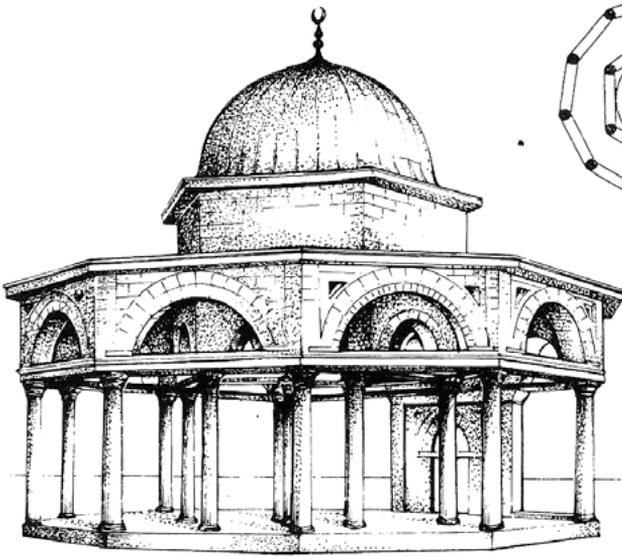
110, 111. Yana Borstein, *The "pavilion" next to the Dome of the Rock and the one next to the northern wall,* 1993

every side, with eight arched gates and stairs, three on the western side, two on the northern and southern ones and just one on the eastern side. The entrance to the building itself is provided by four doors, aligned with the cardinal directions.

The accesses to the al-Aqsa mosque are, on the other hand, just on the main facade of the building, towards north.

Light

The area is oriented with its long sides on the north-south axis, a little towards





112. *Thresholds*
(access porches
from the Old City,
gate to the Dome of
the Rock podium)
2016.
Jerusalem

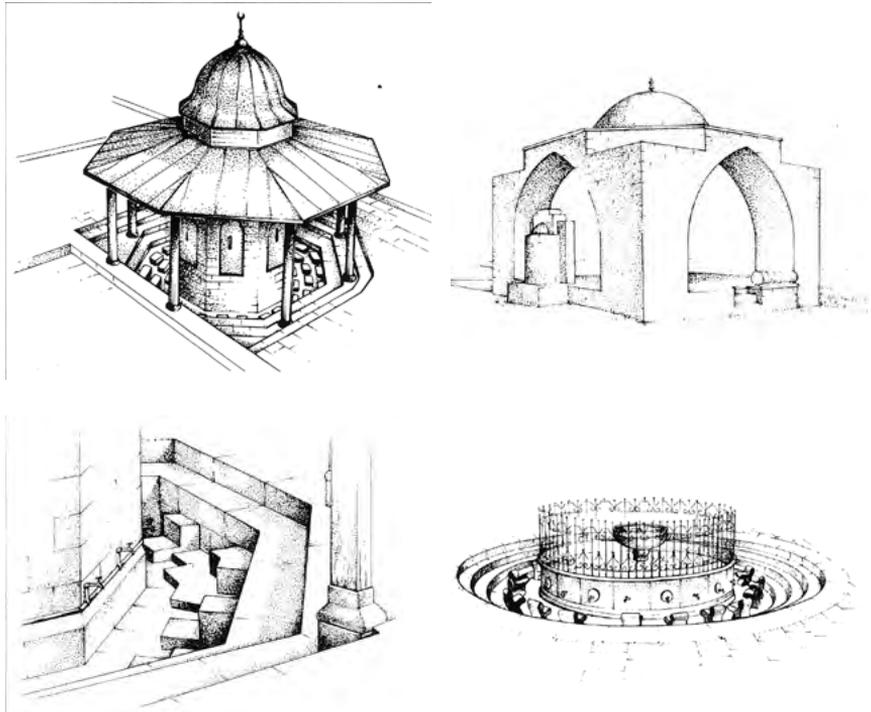
north-west. Due to its openness and the reflection from the paving, every part is very strongly lighted. The areas with porches create a strong light contrast as well as the accesses from the Old City, generally very dark for the density of the building and the presence of “tunnels”. It is interesting to notice that the main facade of al-Aqsa is oriented towards north and it is very shaded, due also to the porch, in strong contrast with the wide open areas on the two other sides.

Sound

As for the light, talking about sound in a such huge and open place it is hard. The perception is of a very quiet space where sounds from the exterior are not entering. This enforces the feeling of being detached from the Old City, creating a strong contrast of density, in both spatial and acoustic terms.

Materials

All the area is characterized by the Jerusalem stone, that is used for all the elements, such as the pavement, walls, gates and few domes. The contrast with



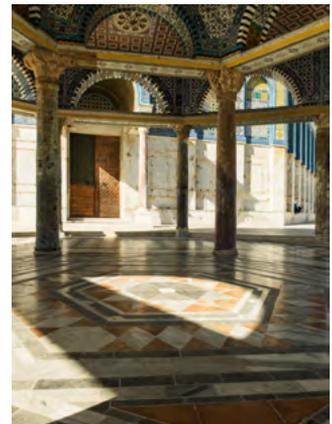
113. Yana Borstein,
*Other structures
of the site,*
1993

the light colour of the stone is created by the vegetation and by some metal domes and green doors and elements.

The very big contrast is represented by the Dome of the Rock and the smaller “pavilion” next to it, covered by colourful tiles, in which the blue colour is dominant. The basement is made by white marble and the columns that support the entrances are from different stones (they appear as spolia columns). Similar colours are present in the mosaic floor under the open “pavilion”. The dome itself is shining, covered by a real gold plated.

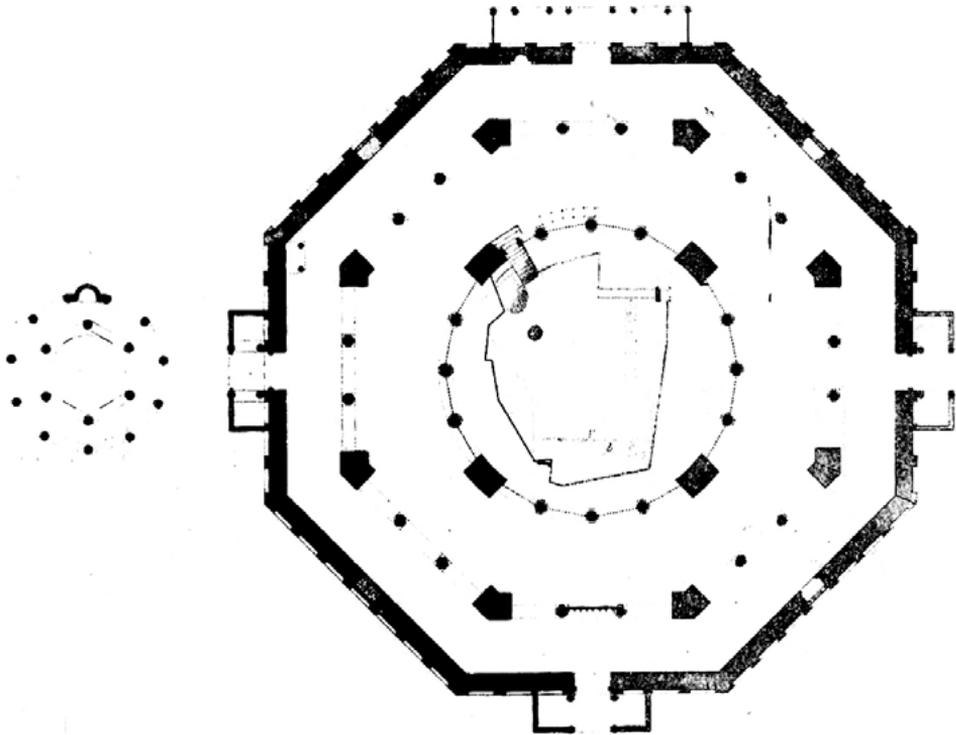
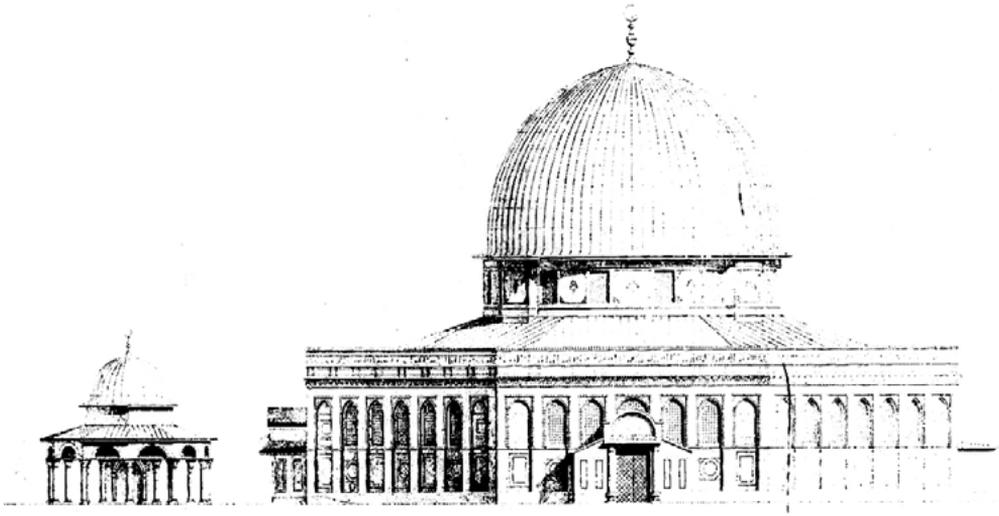
114. Dome of the
Rock's columns

115. The small open
pavilion next to the
Dome of the Rock

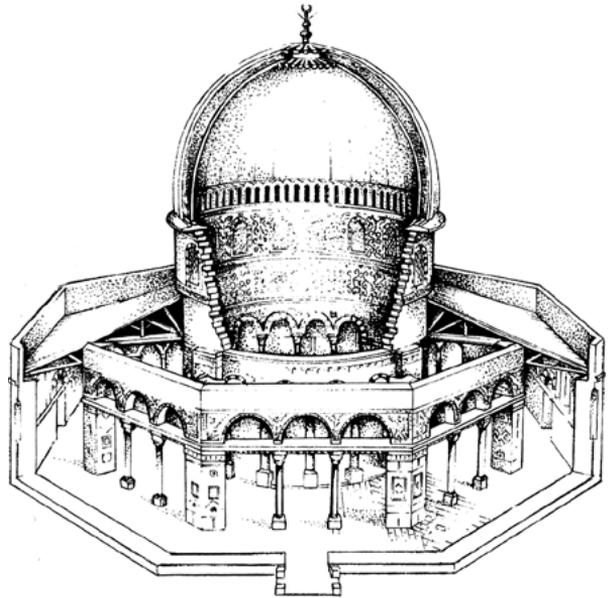
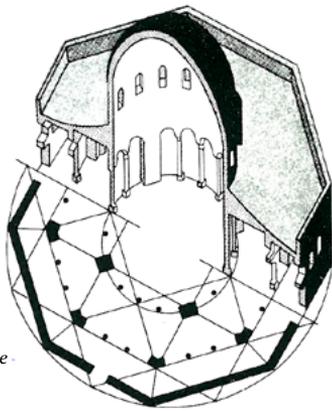
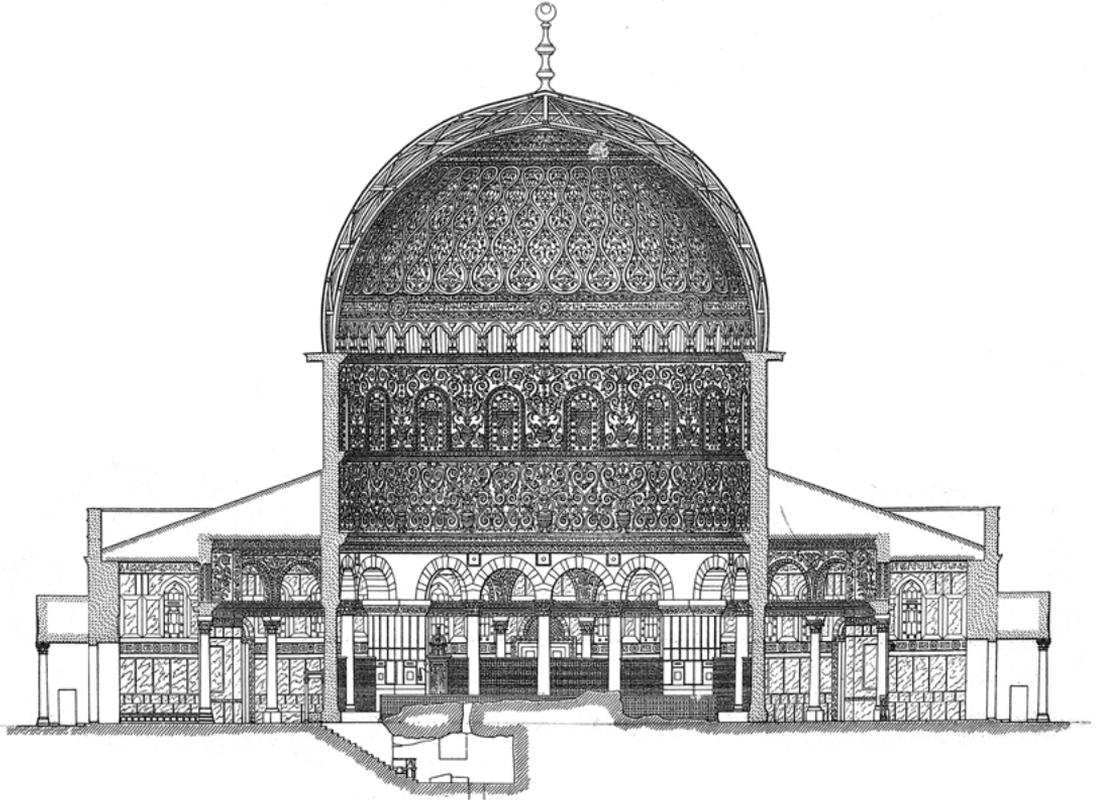


next page
116. *Podium,*
2016.
Jerusalem



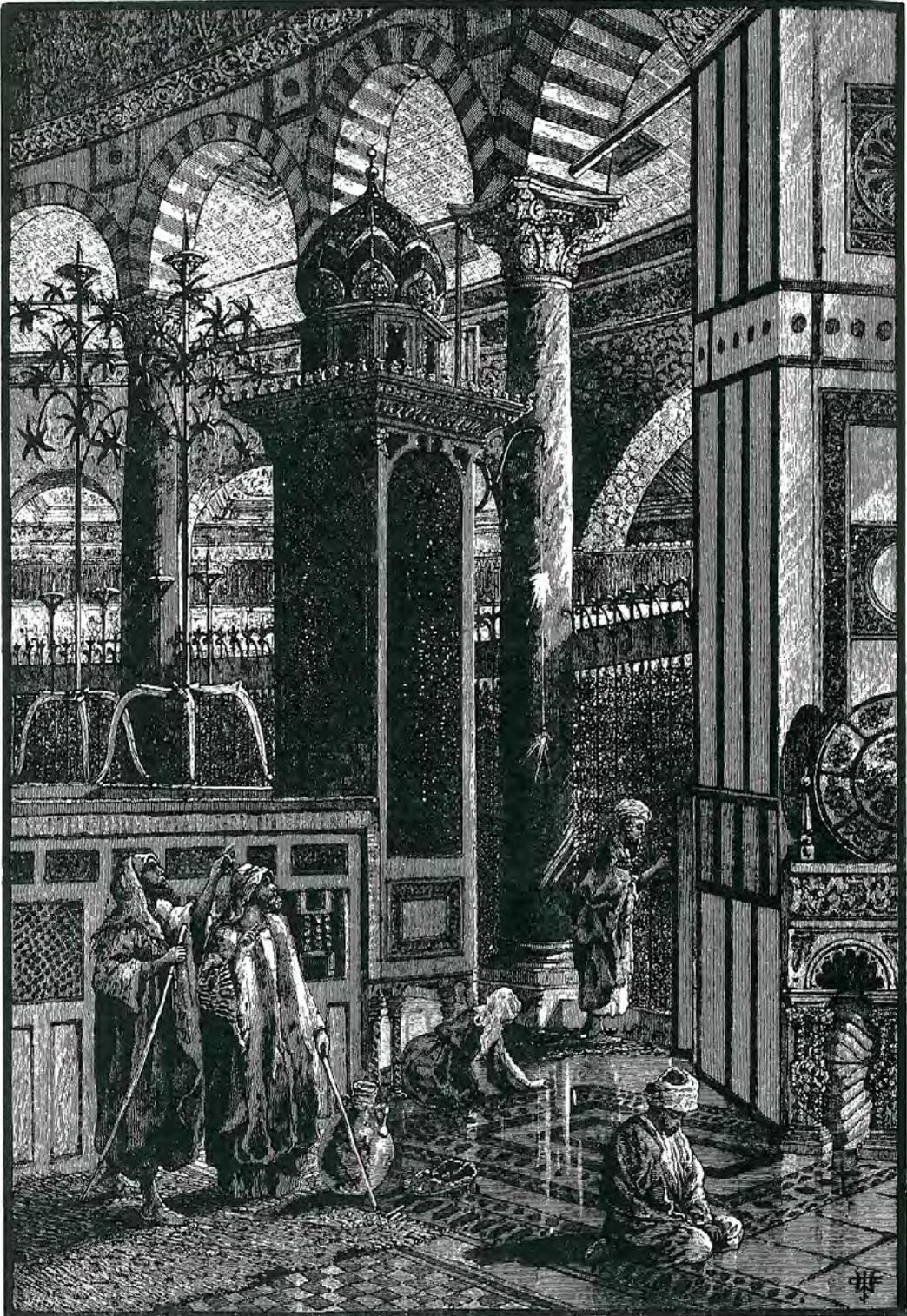


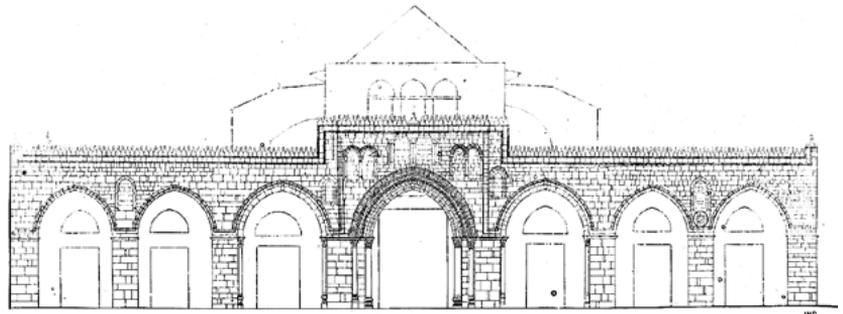
116. *Dome of the Rock (plan and elevation)*



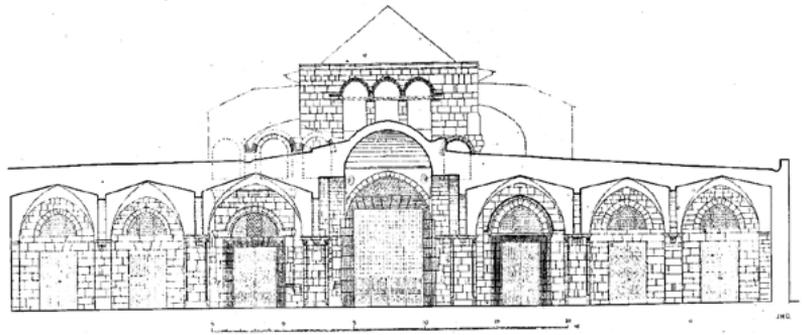
118. Dome of the Rock (section)

119, 120. Yana Borstein, Dome of the Rock (axonometric and perspective cross sections), 1993

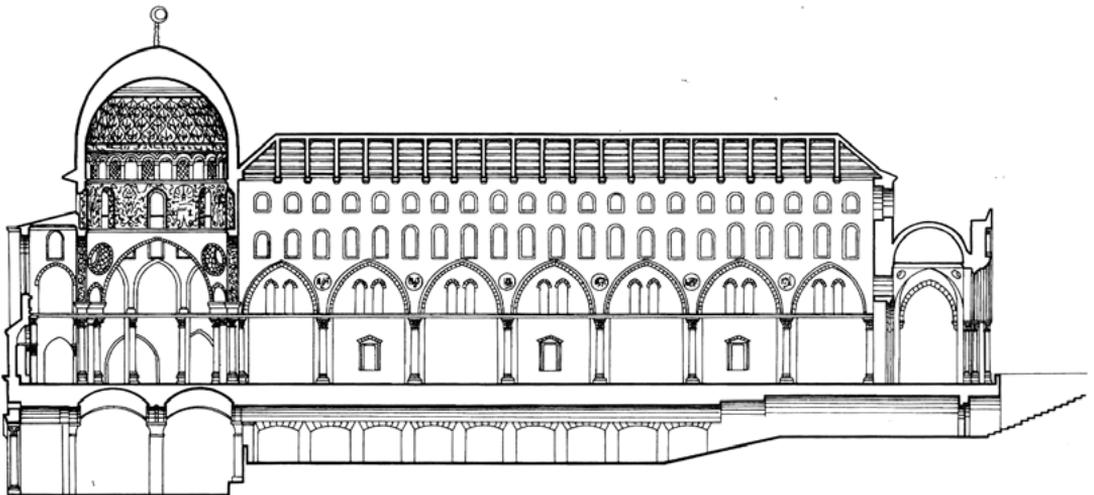




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121. Interior view of
the Dome of the Rock,
19th-century



122, 123. Al Aqsa
sections





DR. ISRAEL GOLDSTEIN SYNAGOGUE

The Dr. Israel Goldstein synagogue is located in the Givat Ram campus of the Hebrew university. It was consecrated in 1957, designed by the architects Heinz Rau and David Reznik³⁶. At that time the university campus was still pretty empty, and the few buildings present were surrounded by free space. Nowadays the synagogue is not used anymore for the regular praying of the campus, being reserved only for special events.



The space (dimensions and proportions)

The building appears as a big white bubble that lays down on the ground, with a diameter of 18 meters and a height of 8. It has two levels: the ground floor with an open area and an enclosed “atrium”, and the upper level where the synagogue itself finds place.

The lower level has three benches in the open space and a particular metal sink in the closed one. A curved staircase connects the two levels. The structure is made by concrete columns to support the first floor, while the “dome” is self-supporting. A wall encloses two sides of the area (north and west), supporting the ground around and including a small building for the toilets, that are so external of the building itself.

The upper level is very fluid and continuous, with the curved wall that doesn't give any point of reference. The furniture is placed freely in the space, while the only focal point is the “altar” and its “podium”, few steps higher than the floor.

Access and movement

Coming from the main portion of the campus (north), the entrance and the arches are not visible, as the level is higher than the entrance one. After going down few steps, the synagogue entrance is immediately on the left. Coming from the passable road (south), the building access is marked and immediately visible, as the level is lower.

After passing the arches, the glass doors are in front, leading to the middle of the “atrium”: on the right the sink, on the left the staircase to the upper level.

124. *Dr. Israeli Goldstein synagogue*
2016.
Jerusalem



125. View from west

Above, the space has almost no directionality, due to its shape.

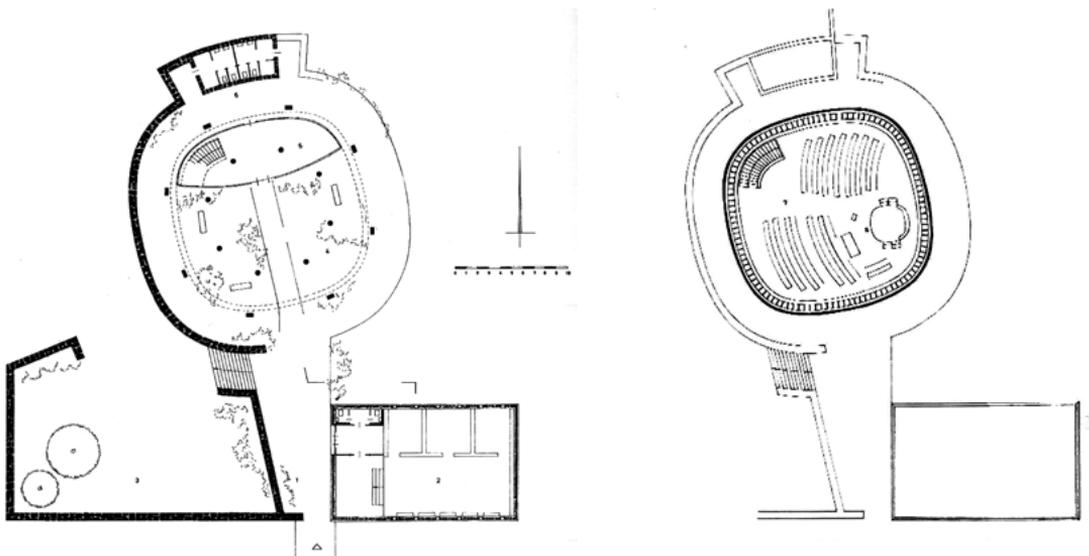
126. The access main access (south)

Light

The access level gets light through the arches, especially from the southern and east sides of the building, where the ground is open in front. The upper level has a very peculiar lighting: the floor is separated from the walls by a transparent ring that brings light to the space, reflecting on the white “dome”.

The only additional light is provided by 4 lamps placed on the “podium”, that

127. Heinz Rau and David Reznik Dr. Israeli Goldstein synagogue (plans of the two levels)





previous page
128. *Purification*,
2016.
Jerusalem



129. Atrium and
staircase

130. "Podium
and altar"

also point to the vault and , in contrast with the diffuse natural light, create a focal point.

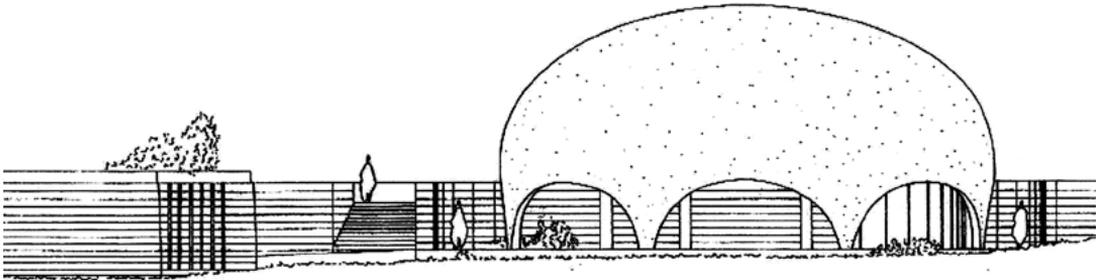
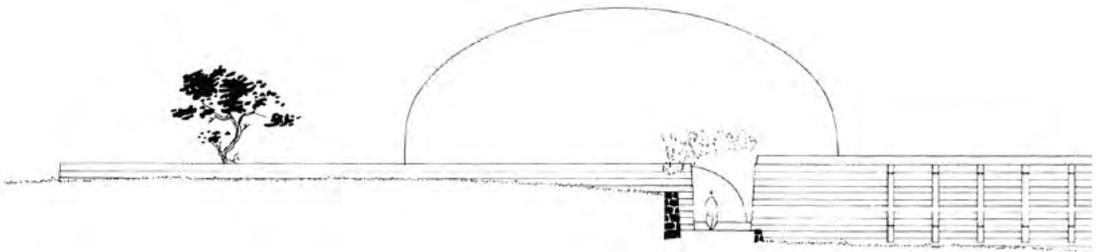
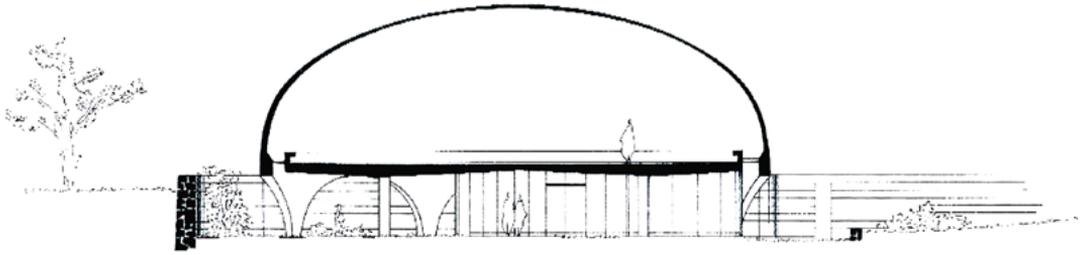
Sound

In the lower level the open shape permits to hear the sounds from the outside and the low ceiling create a bit of echo. The higher level is much more insulated and has a different and very strong echo, given by the vault shape.

Materials

The building is a continuous white concrete casting, while the entrance is enclosed by glass walls and doors, that run all around the "atrium". The concrete shell has a thickness that ranges from 12 centimeters in the lower part, to 6 on the top of the dome. The ground floor wall that enclose the area is built in Jerusalem stone

The floors are made out of stone, rough in the ground level, more refine in the upper one. The "podium" of the altar is built in the same stone and the railing along the perimeter, on the space between the floor and the "dome", are built in metal and rope. Glass elements close this gap.



131. Heinz Rau and David Reznik, *Dr. Israeli Goldstein synagogue (section and elevations)*



SPACE THAT SEES

Located in the compound of the Israel Museum, in the Givat Ram area, this work of James Turrell was realized in 1993³⁷. Out of the main building of the museum, it is part of The Billy Rose Art Garden, that hosts many sculptures, installations and spaces by different artists, including Anish Kapoor, Richard Serra and Sol LeWitt. *Space that sees* is part of the series of works of James Turrell called *Skyspaces*, where, with variations on the same theme, the artists give shape to the sky and the light³⁸.



The space (dimensions and proportions)

The space is a perfect cube, inserted in the natural topography of the site, to which is added a “tunnel” for the access. The exact measures have not been found, but from the survey, the space seems very similar to another *Skyspace* that the artist realized in Ireland the following year, *Air Mass*. The measures of this one are 7,3 x 7,3 meters, with the same height, even if in the interior it is reduced to 6,4 meters by the ceiling. The skylight is a square with a side of 3,65 meters. The entrance tunnel seems instead much different from the one of “*Air Mass*”, that presents just a gate 1,3 x 2 meters, while *Space that sees* has a tunnel few meters long, with a section approximately 1,5 x 2 meters. A seat runs all around the space and has a very unique section, with the seatback inclined of approximately 30° on the vertical and the seat itself 15° on the horizontal.

Access and movement

From the garden is visible just a white short wall that is the top part of the “cube”, stimulating curiosity³⁹. Following the path is it then possible to reach the lower level, where the entrance stands in front of the underneath valley, completely isolated from the museum complex. After passing the entrance tunnel the space is oriented to its centre, marked by the pavement and by the skylight, with the possibility to seat all around, in a position given by the seat shape that directs to sight towards the skylight. From the inside this centrality is broken by the access, that gives a far away view of the surroundings.

132. *Space that sees*,
2017.
Jerusalem

Light

The light is provided entirely by the skylight, as the entrance tunnel doesn't bring much light into the space. The side of the space are almost perfectly oriented in the cardinal directions and during the day the sun movement projects the square lines of the skylight on the interior walls, creating unusual and each time different shapes. It is interesting to notice that the mentioned *Air Mass* has a "hidden" system of artificial lighting for the night, missing in *Space that sees*, probably more suitable also for nocturne sky observations. All the space is directed to the sky and the light and the peculiar section of the ceiling permits to "flatten" the architecture, that becomes just a frame to the sky, infinite but in turn "flatten"⁴⁰.

Sound

The space is very soundproofed from the museum garden, creating a stronger visual and acoustic connection with the far away landscape rather than the museum's garden. A bit of echo is present, due to the space's shape and materials.

Materials

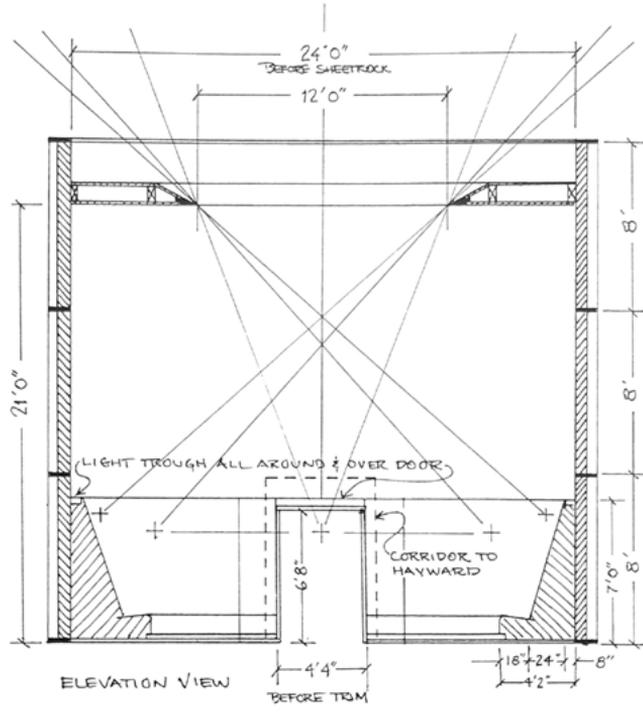
The outside, the upper part of the interior walls and the ceiling are completely covered by white plaster. The lower parts of the walls, creating the seat, is covered by a light pink stone, probably marble. Also the floor is in stone, more yellow than that seat's one and the cut of the tiles create a draw centred under the skylight and the fine slope for the water drainage. In contrast, the entrance tunnel, that moves from the outside stone walls of the natural ground, is left in visible concrete.

133. View from the museum garden

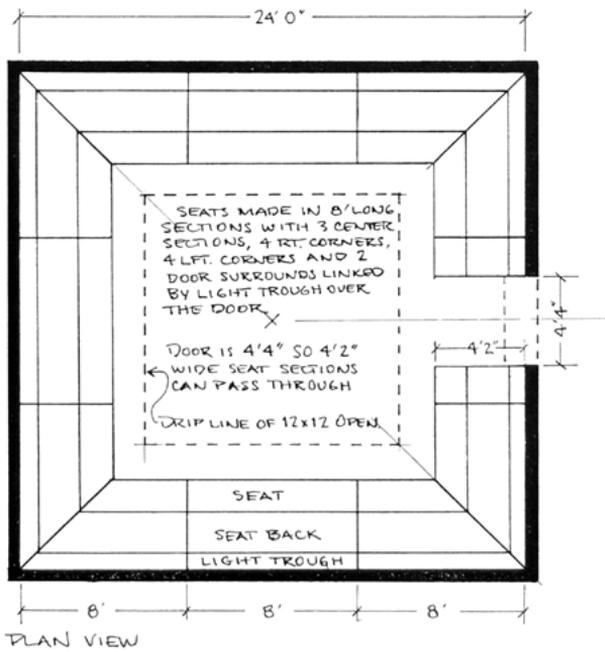


134. The access tunnel and the skylight





AIR MASS, 1993 KILFANE GARDEN, CO KILKENNY, IRELAND



AIR MASS, 1993 KILFANE GARDEN, CO KILKENNY, IRELAND

135. James Turrell
Air mass (section
and plan),
1993



ארבעת
בתי הכנסת
הספרדיים

Four Sephardi
Synagogues

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THE FOUR SEPHARDIC SYNAGOGUES

This group of four synagogues is located in the Jewish quarter of the Old City and was built starting from the end of the 16th-century⁴¹. The first two synagogues to be built are the Yoahanah Ben Zakai and the Eliyahu Hanavi ones, to which was added the Middle and the Istambuli synagogues later.

More than the single buildings it is very relevant, in my opinion, the coexistence of many different spatial-architectural solutions and the relations between them.



The space (dimensions and proportions)

The four different synagogues present very different spaces and proportions. The Yohanah Ben Zakai and the Middle synagogues have a more regular rectangular plan, while the Istambuli and the Eliyahu Hanavi synagogues have a much more “irregular” and central plan (not completely and always directed by the position of the altar). The Yohanah Ben Zakai synagogue measures approximately 20 x 8,5 meters, with a proportion around 1:2,5, while the Middle synagogue has a proportion of 1:3,75, measuring 14 x 3,6 meters. The Istambuli synagogue is approximately 15,5 x 12,5 meters, with the centre space, covered by a dome, measuring around 9 x 9 meters. The Eliyahu Hanavi synagogue, without including its additional small spaces, measures around 11 x 9 meters.

Surveys of the heights of the synagogues have not been found, but it seems that there are not strong differences of height between the different spaces, at least when considering the main ones: for instance the area that surrounds the central space of the Istambuli synagogue is much lower. The “rectangular” spaces are covered by vaults, while the “square” ones by domes.

Access and movement

Each one of the synagogues had initially a possibility of an independent access, some still present, but nowadays is just the southern access of the Yohanah Ben Zakai synagogue that provide the entrance to the complex, on a level that approximately 3 meters lower than the street one. The complex is visible from outside (even if coming from north is not) but at the same time it

136. *The Four Sephardic synagogues*, 2017. Jerusalem



137. *The Middle synagogue*

138. *The Eliyahu Hanavi synagogue*

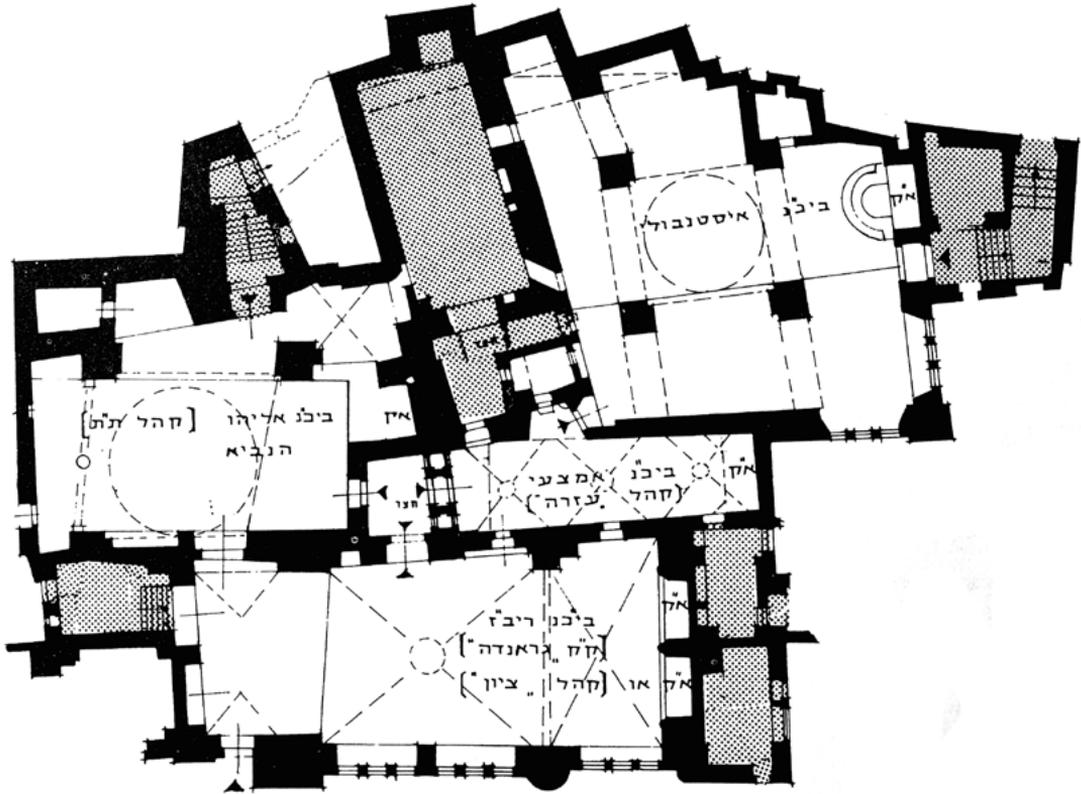
is very introverted, as it is not easy to understand its limits and its nature. Inside the buildings the movement is free and the thresholds between the different synagogues are very interesting. The more peculiar ones are the courtyard that links the first three synagogues and the passage from the Middle synagogue to the Istambuli ones, provided by a niche in the middle of the left wall of the Middle synagogue.

Light

As noticed for the space, also the lighting solutions are various and different for every synagogue. Considering just the natural light ⁴², the Yohanah Ben Zakai synagogue gets light from nine large windows and three small one from the southern long side of the space. The Middle synagogue presents six windows of different dimensions (the perception is of three larger and three smaller, but actually seems that each one is different) and a round opening on the top part of both the short sides (east and west). The Istambuli synagogue has the entrance L shaped space lighted by six large windows and two small ones, on the corner between the southern and eastern walls (four windows in each side). It also presents few round openings on the peak of the vaults ⁴³, while the central space is much darker, getting few light from some windows placed in the dome's tambour, that are formed by small round openings, covered with coloured glass. A similar lighting to this last example is present in the Eliyahu Hanavi synagogue, the darkest of the four spaces.

139. *The Yohanah Ben Zakai synagogue*





140. The Four
Sephardic
synagogues (plan)

Sound

The sound of the exterior doesn't reach the inside, also due to the lower level of the complex. Particular echoes or sound effects are not presents, while the vaulted ceilings provide a good acoustic to the space.

Materials

The complex presents a unity in the use of materials: the outside is in Jerusalem's stone, as almost every building of the city, while the interiors are manly covered with white plaster, with a use of Jerusalem's stone to mark specific elements, such as the doors of passage between the different synagogues. On the other hand the floors are realized with different stones, but in all the synagogues there is the presence of a black stone to mark the different areas, such as the central one in the Istambuli synagogue or a grid centred on the altar in the Yohanah Ben Zakai . Contrast to the white plaster is provided also by the furniture, the windows and a fresco in the Yohanah Ben Zakai synagogue.



141. *The threshold between the Middle and the Yohanah Ben Zakai synagogues*



142. *The Istambuli synagogue*



YAD LABANIM

The Jerusalem Memorial for Soldiers (Yad Labanim) is located at the northern edge of the Sacher Park, in the western edge of the city centre. Realized by the architect David Reznik in 1978, it represents not only a memorial but also a community centre, with a lecture hall and archive, completing the function of the nearby Soldier's house⁴⁴. Opposing the cubic geometry of the Soldier's house, the architect used irregular pyramidal shapes to create this monument, in which the memorial chamber ("memorial tent" in the architect's words⁴⁵) is the main focus.



The space (dimensions and proportions)

The space uses a complex geometry of simple "archetypal" forms to create the space. The two main focal areas are placed at the northern and southern extremity of the complex, corresponding to the two accesses and are linked by an extended open "square". In this square are present seats and a sculpture by the artist Bezalel Schatz⁴⁶, that mediates the view towards east and the city, while the view towards west is enclosed by a sloping wall. Precise measures of the complex have not been found, but following the description of the author⁴⁷ and using a satellite view and the available drawings can be deduce that the entire complex measures approximately 130 x 26 meters, with the "functional" southern pyramid that has an almost square base with a side of 26 meters. From the section can then be deduced that the height of this pyramid, that is not regular, should be around 13 meters, as its eastern face has an inclination of 45° on the ground. Finally, through a proportion can be found the height of the memorial chamber (placed above the functional area), approximately 9 meters.

The complex geometry of the building plays with inclined walls creating pyramidal shapes that represent the "full" and "negative pyramidal" voids in correspondence of the two accesses.

Access and movement

The movement inside this complex is very interesting, enforced by the use

^{143.} *Yad Labanim*,
2017.
Jerusalem

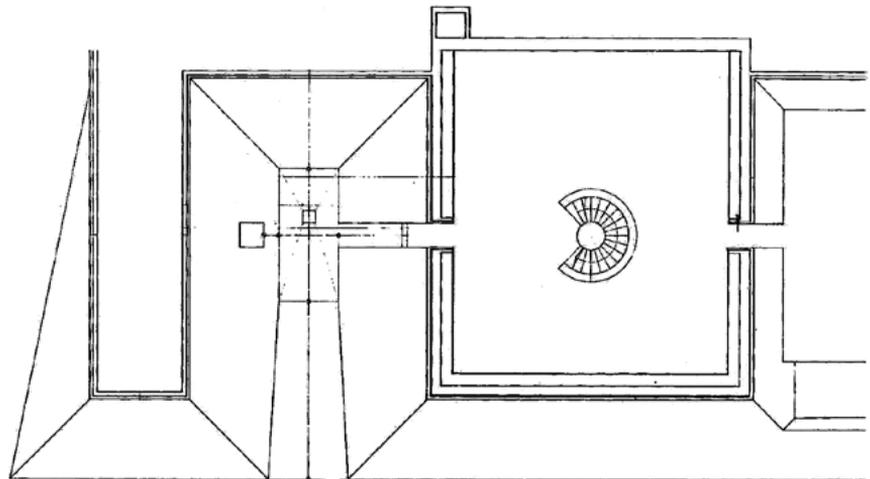


144. Southern access

145. Northern access

146. David Reznik,
*Yad Labanim (plan of
the southern access)*

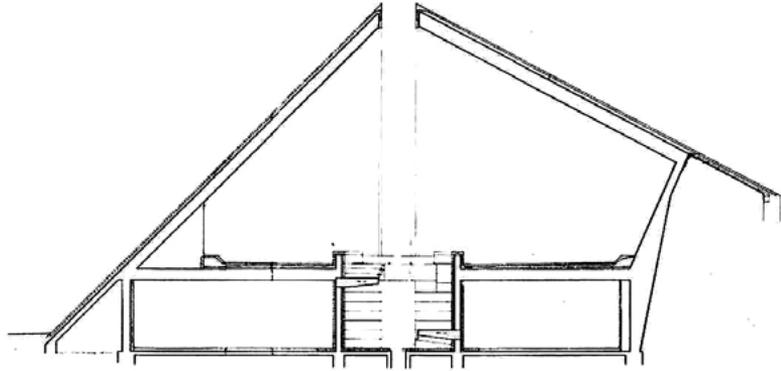
of slopes and ramps. The access is provided by two gates in the fence, even if the northern one seems to be kept often closed. Entering from the southern gate, a delicate slope leads to an open “anteroom” where, turning 90° to the right, the main entrance is marked by a strong cut in the pyramidal shape, crossing all its shape. After entering, on the right a sculpture wall is wetted by a water flux, while in front stands the spiral staircase that leads to the memorial chamber and hide from the view the functional, and very not interesting, spaces. Climbing the staircase the memorial room present a central space, cut once more by the division in the pyramid shape, that mark then the gate towards the open square. Coming from the northern gate, instead, a climbing slope accompanies the movement:



next page
147. Access and gate,
2017.
Jerusalem







149. David Reznik,
Yad Labanim
(section)

also in this case a open “anteroom”, where a bench, a olive tree and the name of the monument are placed, permits a 90° movement towards the open square. Here the “entrance” is marked by two blocks functioning as an open gate, before reaching the square where the two different heights of the two access systems are harmonized.

Light

The building has an orientation perfectly aligned with the cardinal directions, with the higher pyramid of the memorial chamber in the south and the lower entrance system in the north. The main light effects is observable in the memorial chamber, where the cut in the pyramidal shape created long cuts of light on the floor, leaving in a semi-darkness the rest of the space.

Artificial lights are placed all around in blocks on the ground, permitting to illuminate the “sculptural” building also during the night.

Sound

Peculiar sound effects have not been noticed, even if the decision of a almost complete separation from the west side, where residential building are present and the opening towards the east side, where the first building are quite far, enforce also from an auditory point of view this feeling. The memorial chamber, due to its shape, appears quite soundproofed from the outside.

Materials

The outside of the building is completely covered in square blocks of Jerusalem’s stone, giving a strong “monolithic” impression. Also the benches and the lighting blocks are realized in the same material. The sculptural elements are built in a dark metal (probably bronze) while the interior of the memorial chamber is covered by gold anodized alluminium, on which the letters forming the names of the soldiers stand out, realized in the same dark metal.

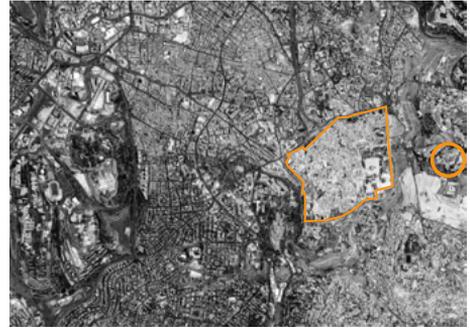
148. *Memorial tent*,
2017.
Jerusalem



CHAPEL AND MOSQUE OF THE ASCENSION

The Chapel of the Ascension is what remains nowadays of the Church of the Ascension, built for the first time in the 4th-century on the top of the Mount of Olives⁴⁸. This was a huge central plan church, with the core part not paved and open to the sky⁴⁹.

The small chapel, built in the middle of the church in the Crusaders period⁵⁰, is nowadays a free-standing building inserted in an courtyard fenced by a stone wall. Next to its access it is present the access hall of the small Mosque of the Ascension. Also the chapel has been used as mosque along history, probably from the 13th-century⁵¹.



The space (dimensions and proportions)

The courtyard in which the chapel is located, trace of the ancient church, has an irregular shape with a diameter about 34 meters on the north-south axis and 26 on the east-west one.

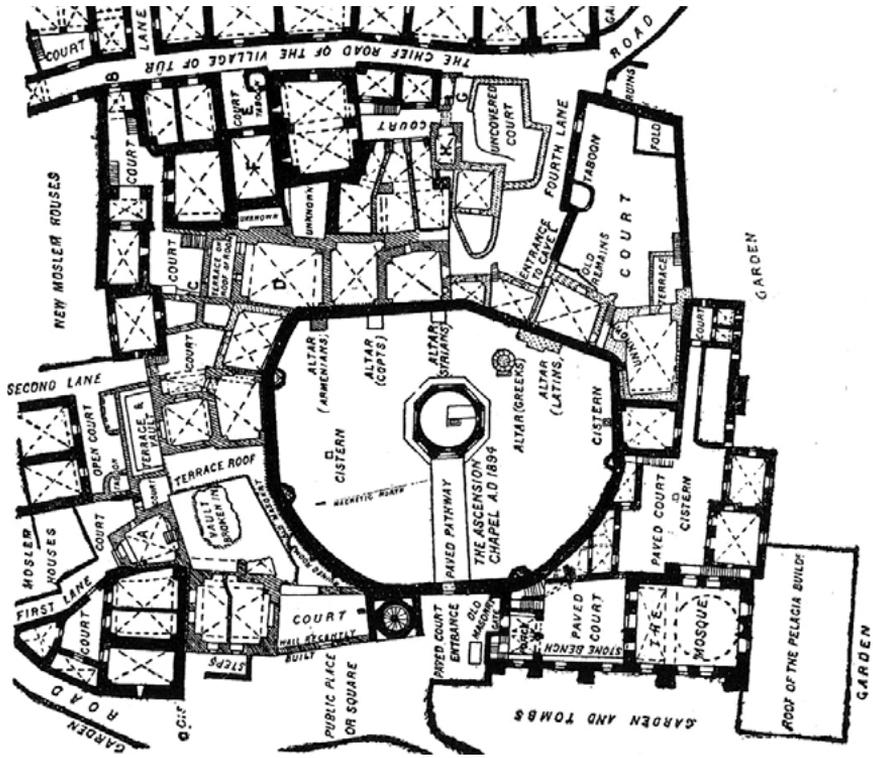
The building of the chapel presents a base that is octagonal outside and circular inside, on which lays a round drum supporting the dome⁵². The diameter of the building is about 6 meters, the height of the base 4,2 and the height at the dome's peak is about 10 meters. The only access to the chapel is provided by a door of 0,8 by 1,7 meters⁵³. Inside the wall presents few recesses, including a *mihṛāb*, added when the chapel was used as a mosque, and a second door, now closed. Between the *mihṛāb* and the entrance, the stone bearing what is believed to be a footprint of Christ is embedded in the floor and measure 0,5 by 0,75 meters⁵⁴.

The space of the mosque is a square room measuring about 6,5 by 9 meters. The first part after the entrance is covered by a cross vault, the rest by a dome. A paved court with similar dimension of the ones of the mosque provides the access.

Access and movement

The access to the large courtyard takes place from a arched door in its western wall. From the street, the door is reached through a diagonal ascending movement, through a system of two rectangular open public spaces. Once in the courtyard, a paved path leads directly to the entrance of the chapel, surrounded

150. *Chapel of the Ascension*, 2017. Jerusalem



151. Chapel of the Ascension (plan)

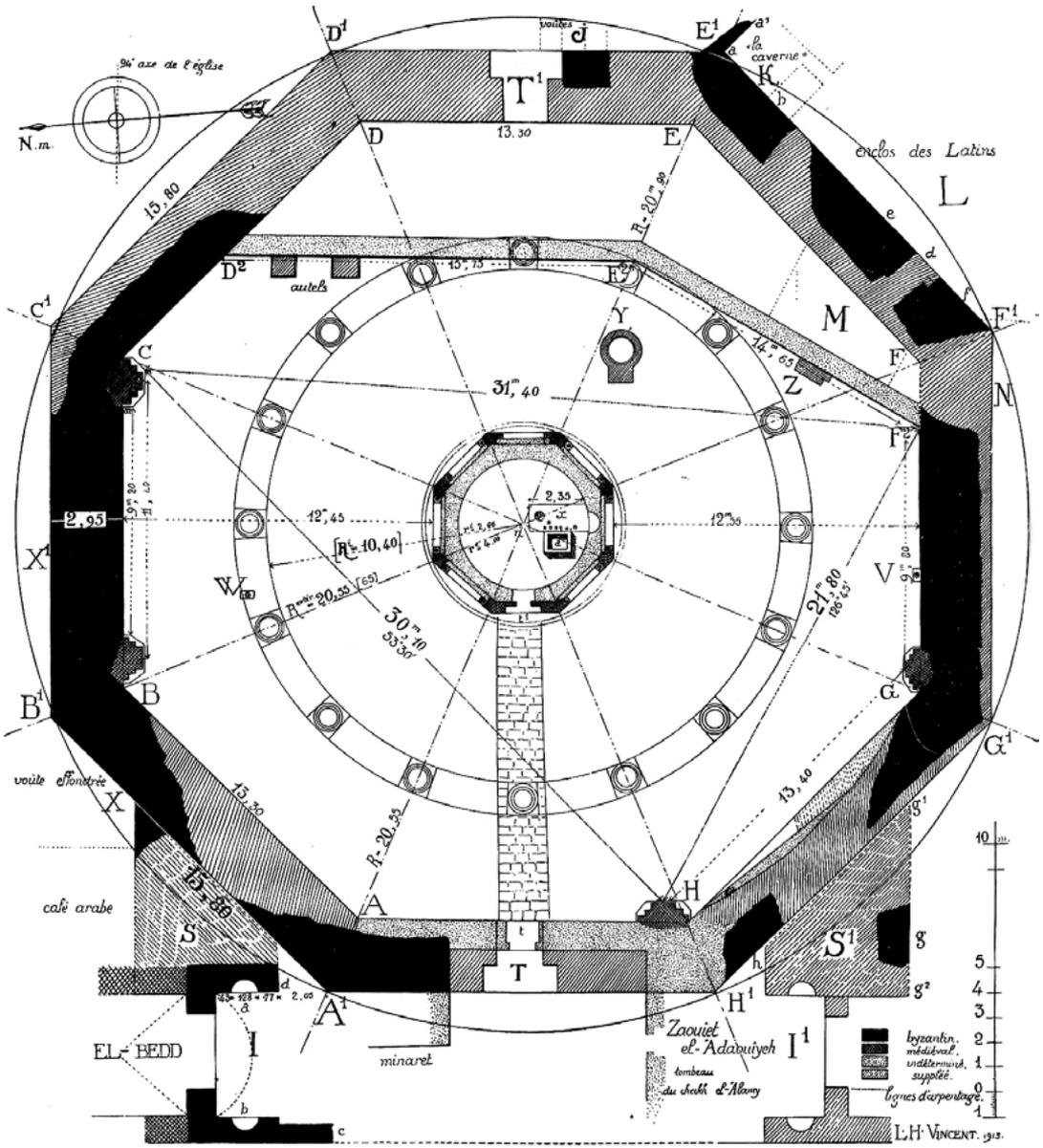
by a gravel floor. It is possible to walk circularly in this open space, observing the few altars present. The interior space is very small and no movement is suggested, it is a more “stationary” place.

The access to the mosque starts from the same open public space as for the chapel, from which a paved covered court leads to the entrance. In the court are present benches to sit on and accesses to service spaces. The one-room space of the mosque has not directionality in term of movement, reinforced also by the domed ceiling, but presents the *mihrab*, indicating the direction of Mecca, immediately visible, as it is aligned with the main entrance.

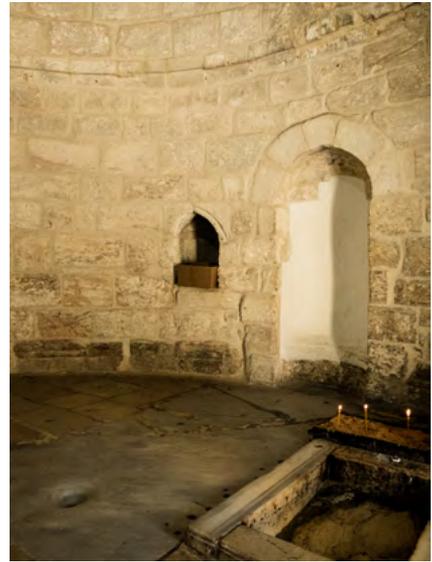
Light

The sun light turns around the chapel during the day, projecting its shadow in the space of the courtyard, that has the long axis oriented north-south. Inside the chapel four tiny windows in the drum, oriented along the cardinal directions, provide a small amount of light, while the entrance door, left open, is able to enlighten the space.

The court that foreruns the mosque is very bright, getting light from many windows located between a new roof and the walls, as well as from few smaller



152. L. H. Vincent,
Plan of the
ascension church
(Crusaders period),
1912



153. Courtyard space

154. The *mihrāb*
and the holy stone

windows in the walls. The mosque presents two large windows on the two sides of the *mihrāb*, towards south and other three similar windows on the western side.

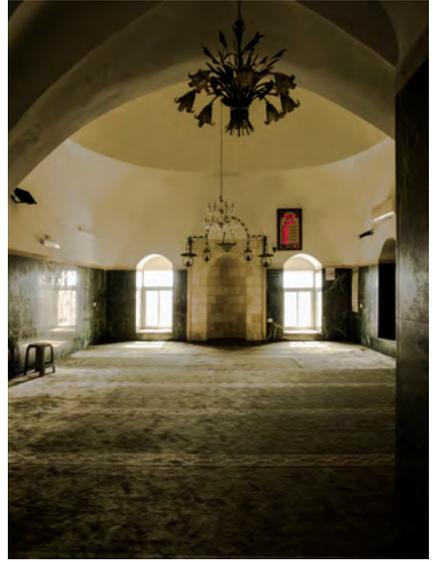
Sound

The position on the top of the Mount of Olives and the fact that on the eastern side the complex is isolated create a quiet environment. Inside the buildings no particular sound effects are presents. It is interesting to notice the different sounds generated by walking on the the various pavements, realized in stone, gravel or covered by carpets.

Materials

The courtyard's wall and the chapel building are entirely built in Jerusalem's stone, while the interior floor and the access path are covered probably in marble, deriving from the previous church building.

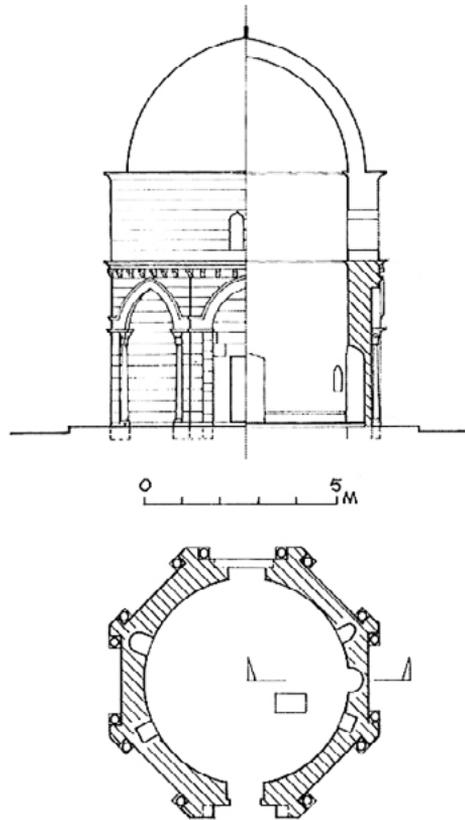
The court forerunning the mosque presents concrete walls, stone floor and a metal roof. The glass covering the windows above one service door is colourful. The mosque presents the floor completely covered by a green carpet. The lower part of the walls are covered by green marble, while the rest is in white plaster. The *mihrāb* is realized in Jerusalem's stone.



155. Paved court
(mosque's access)

156. Mosque space

157. Church of the
Ascension: *plan*
and *elevation* of
the aedicule





KIDRON VALLEYS TOMBS

In the Kidron Valleys, between the Mount of Olives and the eastern walls of the Old City are present many tombs, that lay on the western slope of the Mount of Olives. In the lower part, almost completely hidden in the rocks (but visible then from the Old City walls), are present four very peculiar funeral monuments, dating back to the second and first century B.C.⁵⁵. They are the Pillar of Absalom, the Jehoshaphat's Cave, the Zechariah's Tomb and the Tomb of the Sons of Hezir.



The space (dimensions and proportions)

Nowadays it is not possible to access the inside of the tombs, that are anyway very interesting for their “landscape” value and the way they are built.

Two of this tombs, the Jehoshaphat's Cave and the Tomb of the Sons of Hezir, are a system of caves interconnected, having a main “facade” towards the main trail. The first one presents a large gate with a classical tympanum on the top, the second has a Greek colonnade on a level few meters higher than the one of the trail.

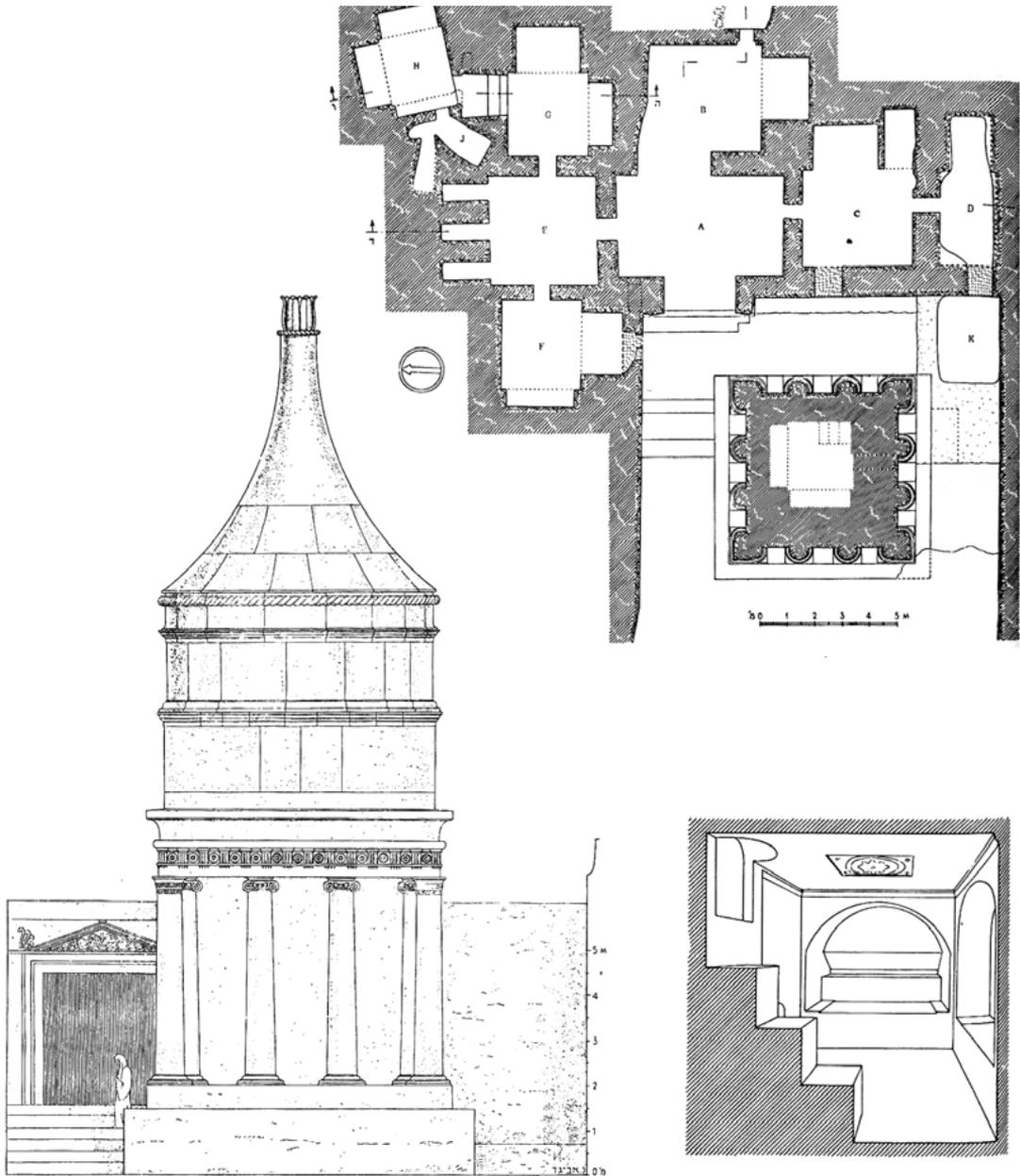
The Pillar of Absalom is realized by a cubic base hewn from the rock, to which is added a constructed drum and “pinnacle”. The inside is hollow and contains a staircase and a burial space. The square base has a side about 7,5 meters and a height of 8, while the height on the peak of the pinnacle is about 18,5 meters. The burial space is about 2,5x2,5 meters, with two recesses in the walls 0,8 meters deep.

The Zechariah's Tomb is entirely hewn from stone and has no interior space, being just a funeral monument and not a real tomb. It is a cube, with columns sculpted, with a base of 5 meters and a height of 7,5, on which stands a pyramid. The total height results about 12 meters, the same as the cliffs from which the tomb is hewn.

Access and movement

From the trail that permits the movement in the valley, the tombs are easily reachable and it is possible to turn around the Pillar of Absalom and the

158. *Kidron valleys tombs*, 2017. Jerusalem



159. *The Pillar of Absalom and the Jehoshaphat's Cave (plan and sections)*

Zechariah's Tomb, in an interesting interstice between the cliffs and the tombs. In this spaces are present the access to the Jehoshaphat's Cave (next to the Pillar of Absalom) and Tomb of the Sons of Hezir (next to the Zechariah's Tomb). The latter requires to climb a small metal ladder to reach its access.

Unfortunately is not possible to move inside the caves, that present a very



160. *The Pillar of Absalom*

161. Interstice behind the Tomb of Zechariah



162. David Roberts R.A.,
The Tomb of Zechariah,
1839.
Jerusalem

next page
163. *Tombs of Zechariah and the Sons of Hezir (plan and sections)*

complex system of spaces. From the plans is possible to imagine them and notice that the Tomb of the Sons of Hezir has different levels linked by steps.

Light

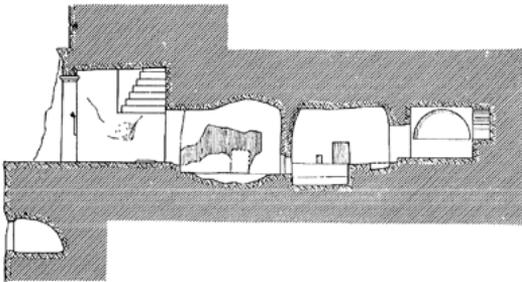
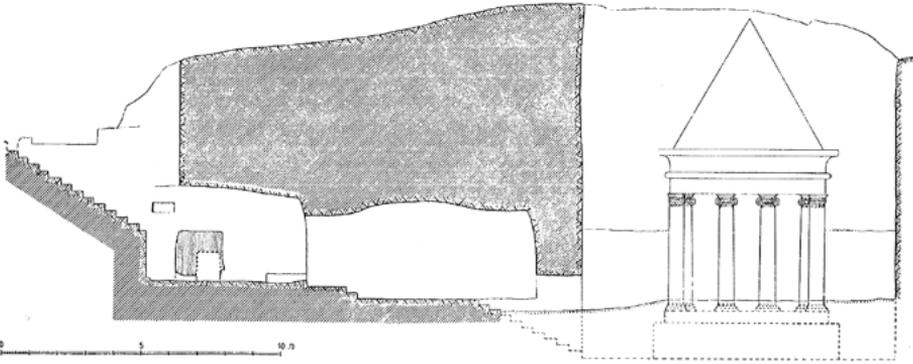
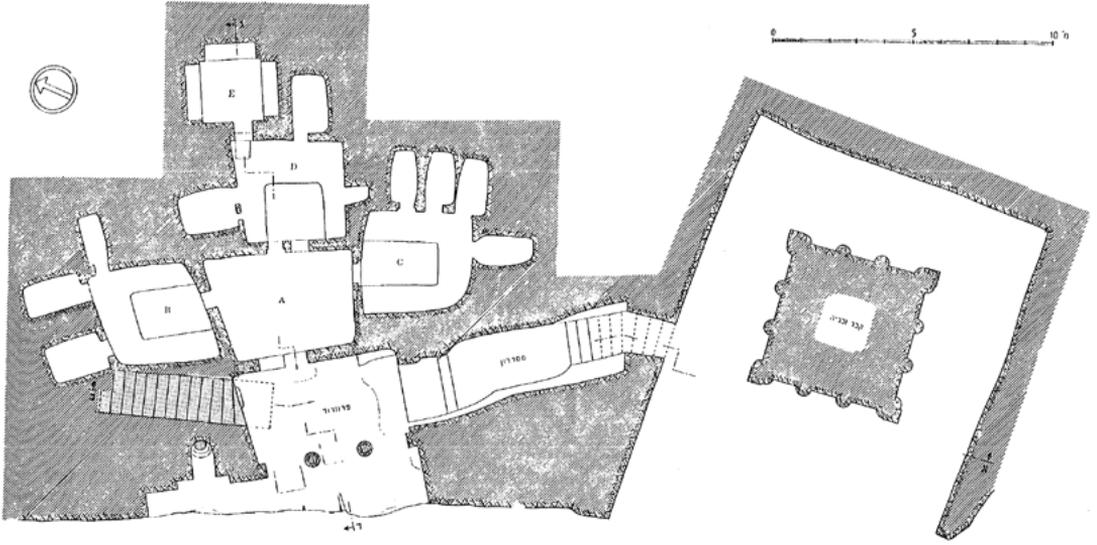
As the tombs are carved in the western cliff of the valley, during the morning are not directly enlightened by the sun, while during the day are able to get a light with strong contrasts deriving from the recessed position. The interstitial spaces between the cliffs and the tombs are then darker and the caves are enlightened just in the access areas.

Sound

As the access to the interior spaces is forbidden, it is impossible to talk about the sound characteristic of this tombs. It is an experience of an open space, very wide, without any specific sound effects.

Materials

All the tombs and elements are fully realized in Jerusalem's stone, as they are mainly works of carving the stone of the valley itself.

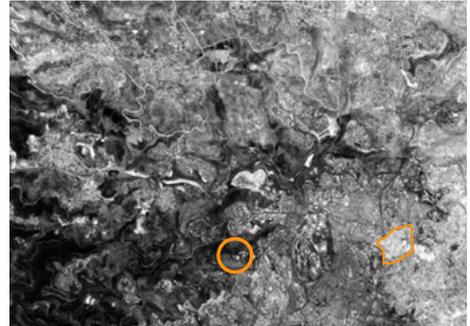




YAD VASHEM CHILDREN'S HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

In the garden of the Jerusalem's Holocaust Museum (Yad Vashem), the Israeli architect Moshe Safdie realized between 1976 and 1987⁵⁶ a small building for the memory of the kids killed in the Shoah.

It is an architecture in which the perception of the space is very hard, in a deeply estranging experience that confuse the mind and the orientation feeling.



The space (dimensions and proportions)

The main space is an underground octagonal chamber lined with mirrors, containing another octagonal wall of semi-reflective material, with inside a triangular element containing a candle. The side of the octagonal space is 8,4 meters and the one of the interior octagonal 5,2, leaving the space for the runway, 1,5 meters large. The chamber has an interior height of 5,8 meters and the runway is raised 1,2 meters, increasing the “suspension” feeling.

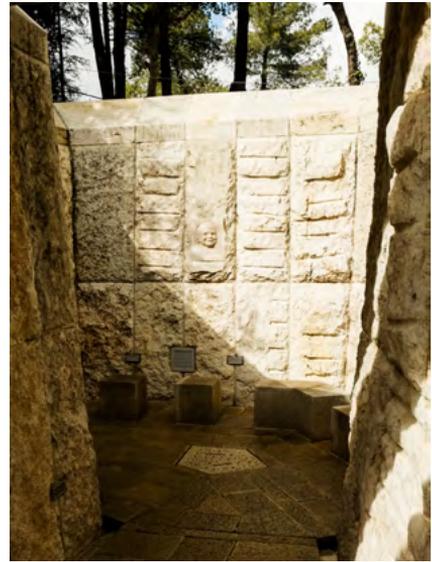
The entrance path is about 20,5 meters long, descending to the level of the hall, that provides other 13 meters to reach the level of the main chamber. The exterior path has an initial section of 3,3 meters, that decrease to 1,5, reaching the small open space that creates a turn.

On the top of the chamber is present an amphitheatre and a series of monolithic stone pillars.

Access and movement

The access to the chamber takes place through an open descending path, partially covered by five concrete beams, the first one marking the threshold. A small space with few benches and a kid's face engraved in the wall permits the change of direction, with a V movement, to enter then the hall, after turning again. The hall invites to continue descending, again along a zig zag movement towards the entrance of the main chamber. The movement in this space is very hard and can follow two directions, both leading to the exit, but it is not easy to understand one's position in the space and it is possible to turn around without

164. *Children's Holocaust Memorial*, 2017. Jerusalem



165, 166. Access path

fully understand it. After finding the exit, an empty space leads to the exterior, on the other side of the hill comparing to the entrance's position. The movement is again not linear and the exit has a "conic" shape, open to the landscape in front.

next page
167. Children's
Holocaust Memorial
(plan and section)

Light

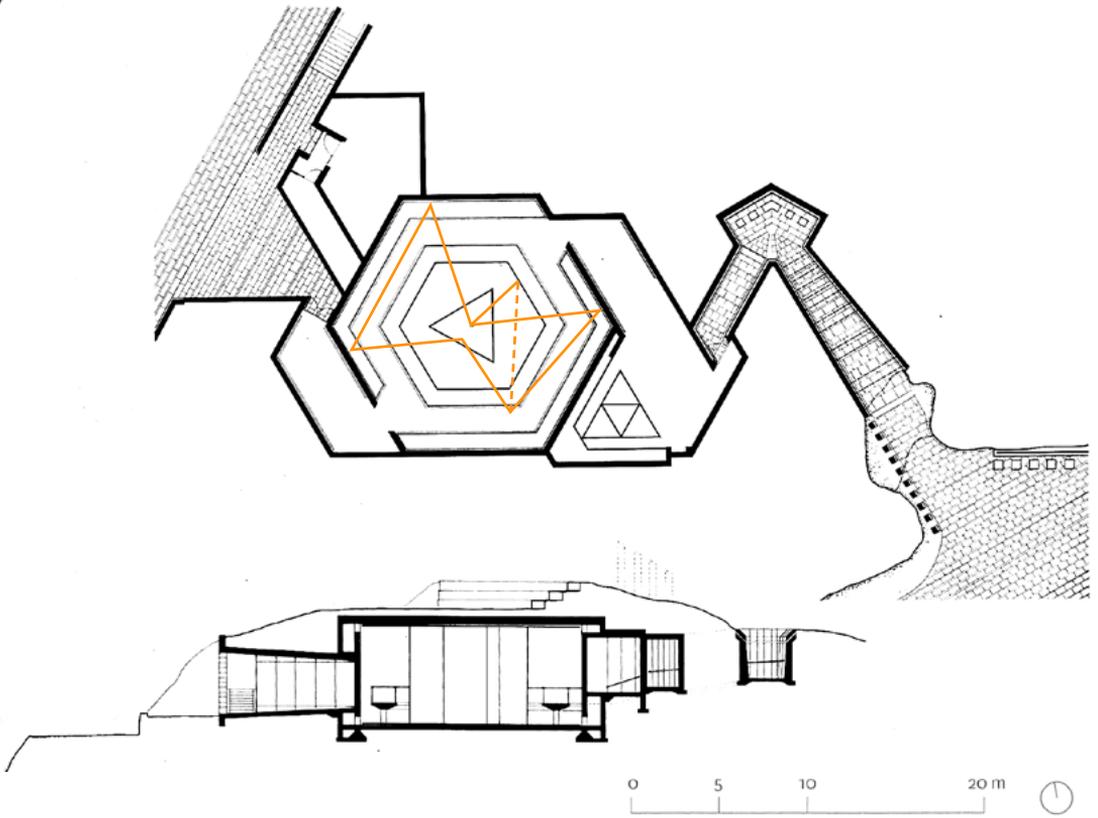
The access ramp and space are enlightened by natural light, creating contrasts on the stone, due to the particular geometries. Inside the only light sources are the lights of the kid's pictures in the atrium and a candle's light in the main space. The infinite reflection on the mirror multiplies this light, that anyway remains a spotlight, leaving the space dark to the point that it is not easy to move inside.

Sound

Particular sound effects have not been noticed, but the feeling inside the building is that of a good soundproofing from the exterior.

Materials

The access path is carved in the ground, resulting in Jerusalem's stone, as well as the paving, with rectangular blocks. The other elements of the path (beams and bench blocks) are realized in concrete. The inside is characterized by the feeling of cold materials, the metal of the rails and the mirrors and semi-reflecting surfaces.

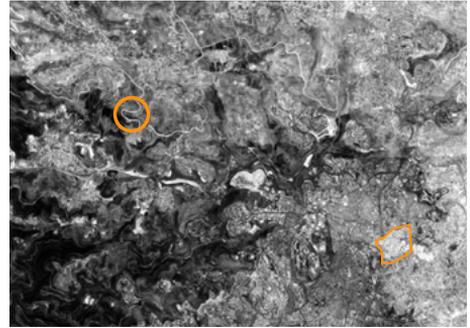




NABI SAMUEL

The complex of Nabi Samuel is located on a hill 7,5 km north-west of Jerusalem, on the site in which many people have believed, along history, that the prophet Samuel is buried. A church is probably present here from the 5th-century, but in the 12th-century the site became a large monastery and fortress, whose ruins are today still visible⁵⁷. In the 17th-century the remains of building of the church have been transformed into a mosque, rebuilt then around 1912⁵⁸.

Nabi Samuel is a holy site for Judaism, Christianity and Islam, functioning today as a mosque in one part and as a Jewish shrine in the space of the crypt.



The space (dimensions and proportions)

The complex is composed by many spaces that have been built along history on the foundation and walls of the previous church. It has not been possible to access the mosque, occupying the space of the nave of the original church, while the space of the crypt didn't appear particularly interesting for the aim of the research. The focus, therefore, has been direct on the complex as a whole, on the entrance space (used in the past as a mosque) and its connection to the rooftop.

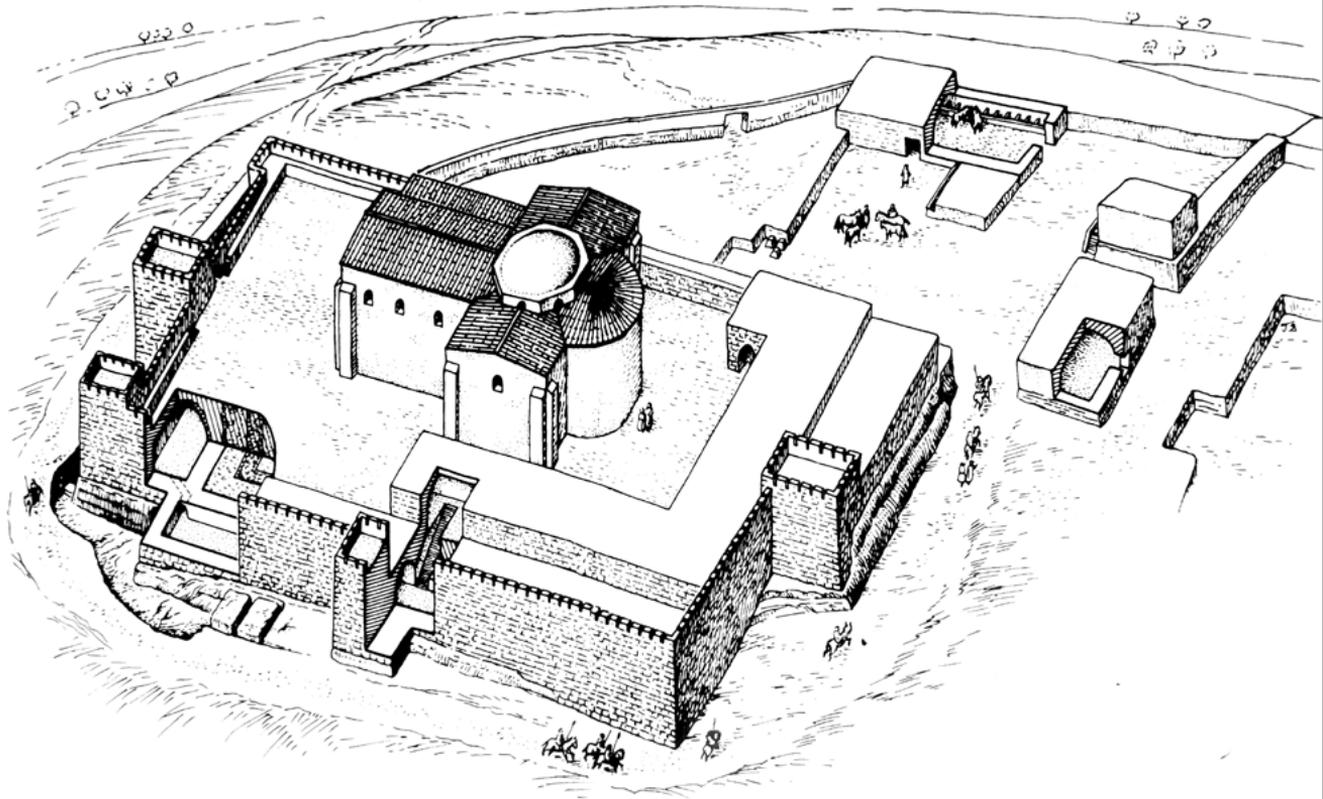
The building, free-standing on the hill, has a long side of 39 meters and a short one between 18 and 27 meters, due to the recesses on the southern side. The entrance space, occupying the transepts of the original church, measures nowadays about 18,6 by 8,5 meters, covered by large vaults, with a maximum height from the floor of 12 meters. The northern part of the transept has been closed to realize the accommodation for the guardian of the mosque⁵⁹, while the southern one is separated by the rest of the space by a step and a fence and has in the southern wall the *mihrab*, indicating the direction of Mecca.

The rooftop terrace has the size of the whole transept, about 23,5 by 8,5 meters and the floor is very irregular, with large bumps created by the vaults of the lower space.

Access and movement

To reach the site it is necessary to follow an ascending street, deviating from

168. *Nabi Samuel*,
2017.
West Bank



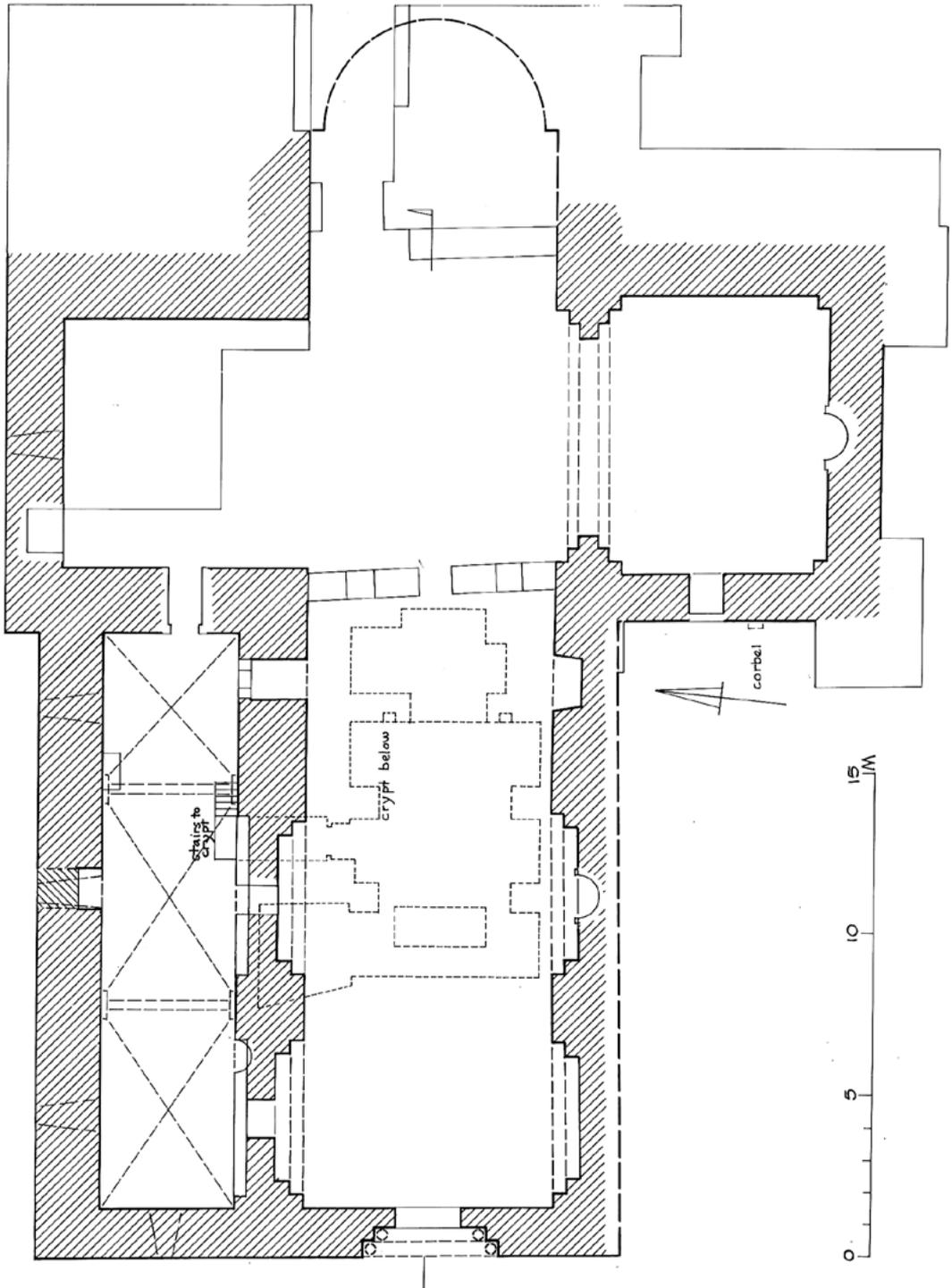
169. *Graphic reconstruction of the Crusaders fortress (Nabi Samuel)*

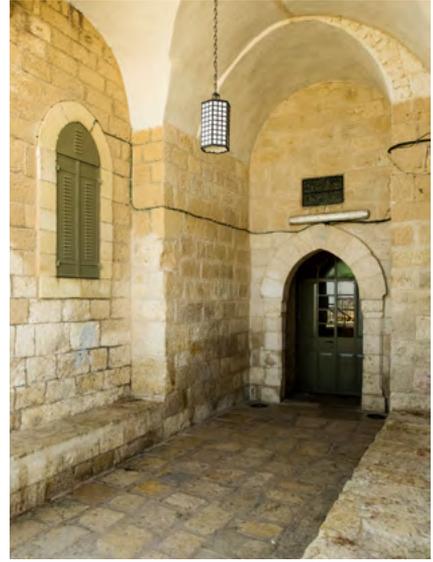
the main road, connecting Jerusalem to Ramallah. The original access to the church was taking place from a large gate in the west wall, now closed but still visible. Nowadays the building entrance, in the east wall, is reached after a walk on the runway above the archaeological excavations. After descending few steps, a covered but open “corridor” leads to the main door. After the entrance, the large space invites to spend time in it, observing all its parts, but it is possible to immediately turn left and take the long metal staircase that leads to the rooftop. Crossing the entrance space is otherwise possible to reach the access to the mosque, or to the vaulted corridor that brings to the staircases to the lower crypt. From this corridor is then possible to exit the building on the northern side.

Light

The interior of the building is enlightened all the time by a very bad red artificial light, that influences considerably the perception of the space⁶⁰. It can be imagined that the space would be otherwise pretty dark, as just three windows are present in the south part of the transept and other three in the eastern one, above the entrance, not very big compared with the dimensions of the space. Small round openings are then present at the peak of the vaults.

170. *Nabi Samuel, church of St. Samuel (plan)*





171. The original gate

Sound

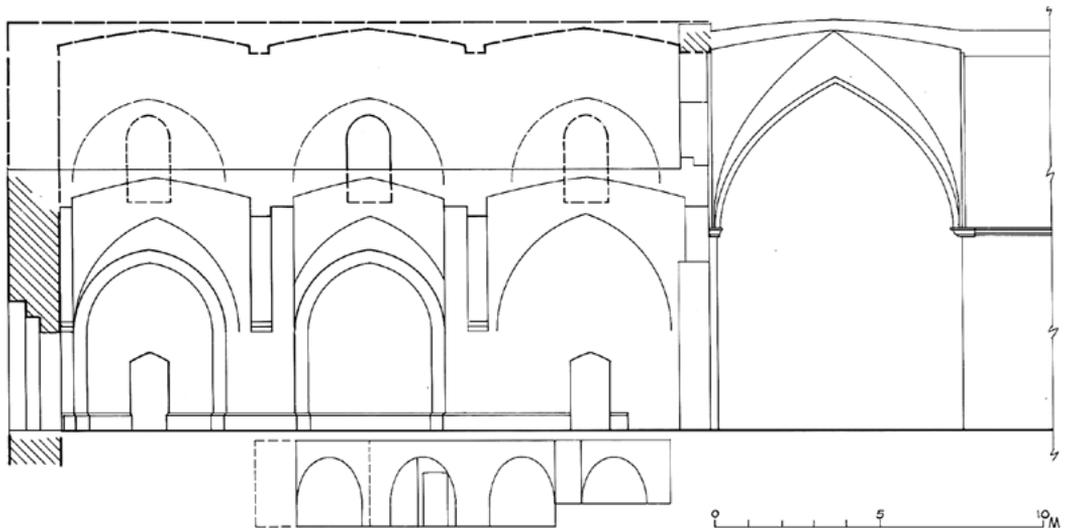
172. Nowadays entrance

In the entrance space the sound effects are very strong, with a very peculiar echo, due to the shape and height of the ceiling. On the rooftop, by contrast, a great quiet can be experience, for the height position and the distance from roads and cities.

173. Nabi Samuel, church of St. Samuel (section)

Materials

The building is entirely realized in Jerusalem's stone, as well as all the archaeological remains of the Crusaders' fortress, creating a very strong





174, 175. *The entrance space*

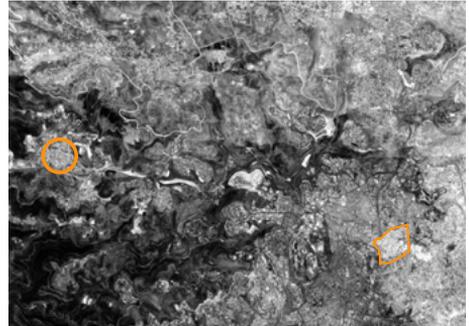
monolithic impression, anchored to the ground of the hill . Also the vaulted ceiling are realized in stone, left visible, with a technique that is common in the ancient buildings of Jerusalem. A contrast to the colour of the stone is found in the doors and windows, in metal painted in green.



CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

This Romanesque church is the core of the Benedictine monastery of the village of Abu Gosh, few kilometres west from Jerusalem. It was built in the 12th-century and has survived till nowadays without essential modifications⁶¹.

It represents an interesting case study due to the peculiar spaces of the two levels of the building, the movement inside them and the unique atmosphere.



The space (dimensions and proportions)

The space of this church is very peculiar, with three aisles with almost the same dimensions, ending in three apsis, without transept. Six pillars divide the space in twelve areas, corresponding to the groin vaults of the ceiling.

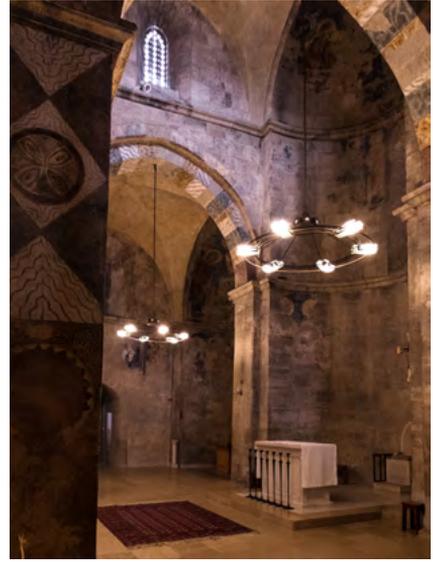
The building presents very thick walls (more than 2,5 meters) and measure externally about 27,5 by 20,6/21,3 meters, internally about 20,2 by 15,6 meters. The internal height of the nave is 12,8 meters, from the floor to the peak of the vaults, and the area of the altar is raised few steps.

The underneath crypt occupies half of the space of the church, with the same structure of pillars and vaults. The rest of the space is taken by the access system, with a staircase that begins with a width of about 2,4 meters and ends 3,6 meters large. The space of the crypt has different levels, linked by steps, in which the central one is the landing from upstairs and presents a large stone element covering a spring below. The height of the space in this central part is 5,8 meters, reaching in the other spaces a minimum of 4, without considering the small apsis spaces.

Access and movement

After entering the monastery complex, the church appears few meters higher and it is necessary to follow a L-shaped slop or to climb some staircase to reach the access. The main door of the church is on the third bay of the long north wall, providing a unusual access, perpendicular to the main direction of the space. A private access from the other buildings of the complex are present on the same

176. *Church of the Resurrection*, 2017. Abu Gosh, Israel



177. The access path

178. Eastern
apsis spaces

next page

179. Church of the
Resurrection (plan
at ground level)

180. Church of the
Resurrection (plan
at crypt level)

wall and the same in the lower space of the crypt.

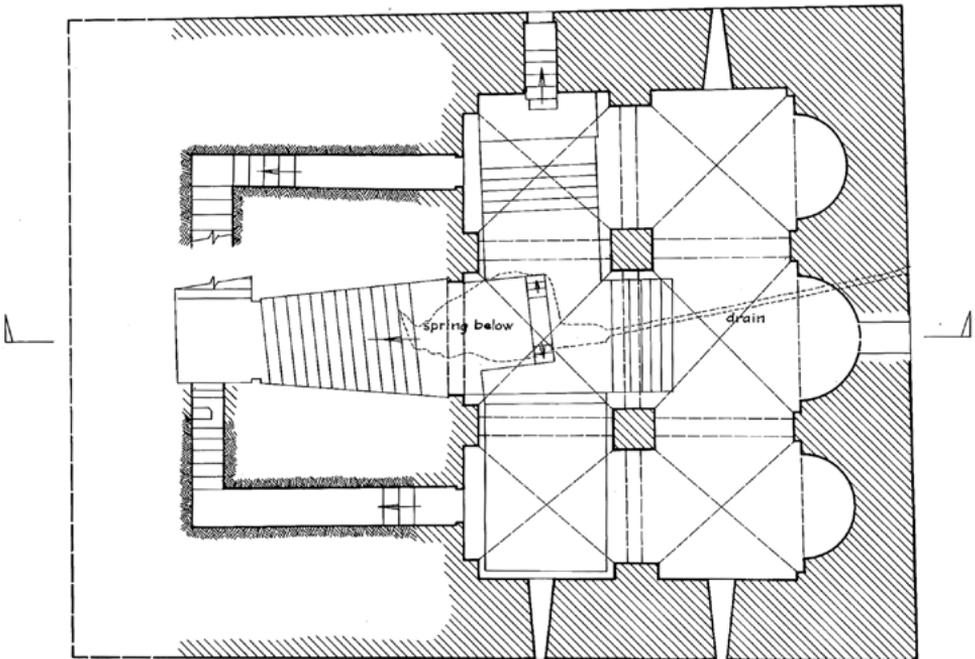
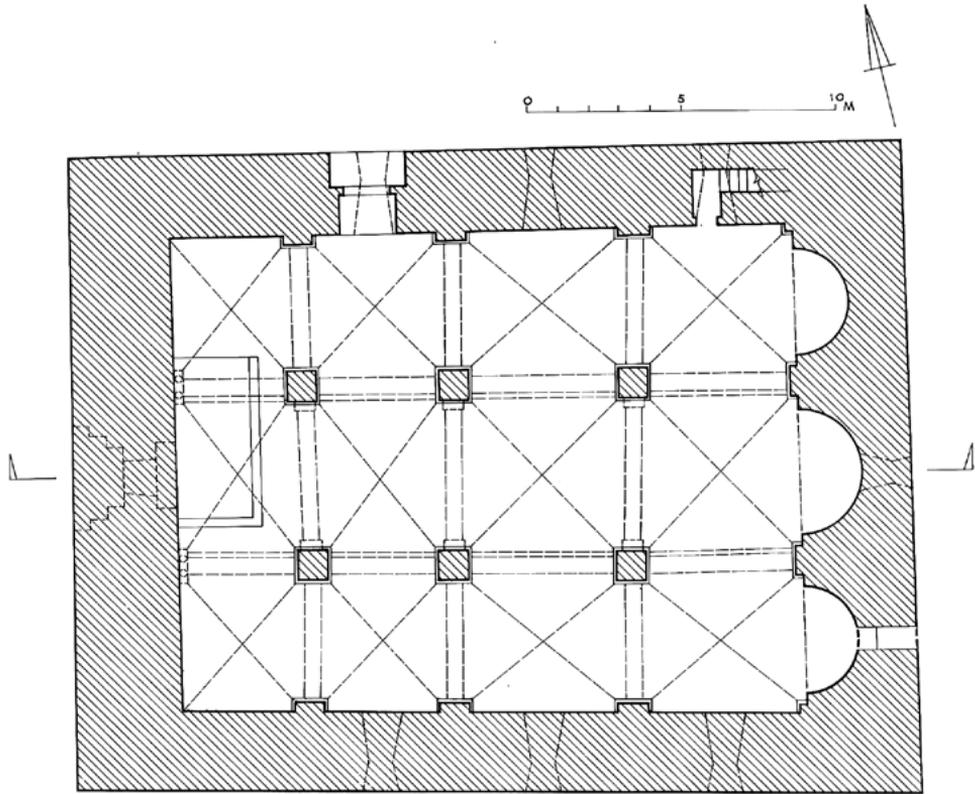
The characteristics of the space prevent spatial hierarchies, even if the nave is always perceived as the main space, due to its position and greater height.

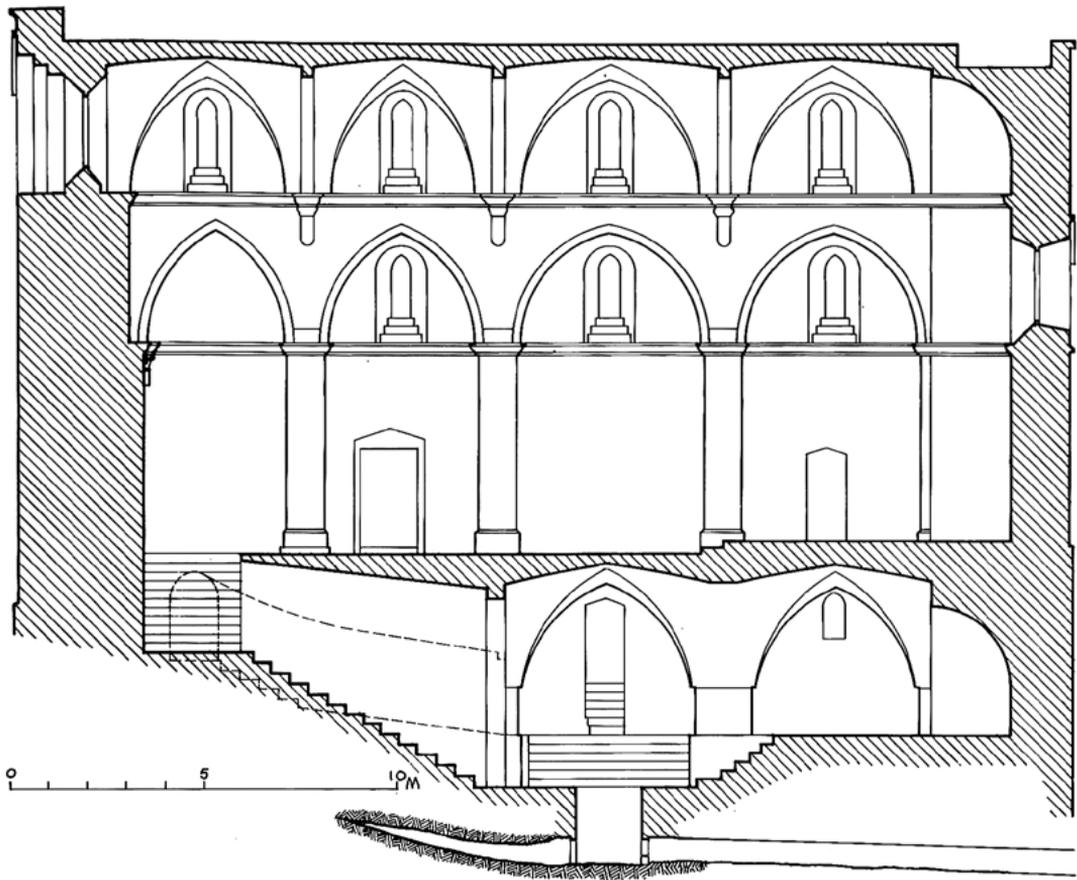
At the west end of the church, opposite to the altar is present the L-shaped staircase to reach the level of the crypt. In the crypt is possible to move on the different level and a tiny double staircase brings down to the water spring.

Light

The church is oriented with its long axis on east-west direction and presents a well studied artificial lighting, with chandeliers pending from the arches that separates the aisles from the nave. The natural light is on the other hand very few, provided by arched window frames with round openings, on the two long side of the building, two windows for every bay, except the last one that has just one. On the top of the south wall is present a single window, opposite to another window at the northern end of the nave, but the two are not aligned, as they are on the two different windows level.

Also the crypt presents an interesting artificial lighting, with light sources built in the base of the pillars, projecting light on the vaults. When they are not switched on, the natural light create an even more interesting atmosphere, semi-dark: just two slits in the south wall and one in the north wall bring a transversal gloomy light to the space, enlightening the stone covering the spring.





181. Church of the Resurrection (section through the nave and crypt, looking N)

Sound

Echo effects are present in the church, and in particular in the lower space, where the sounds are amplified, increasing the very peculiar spatial sensation.

Materials

The church is built in Jerusalem's stone, material the characterized the exterior of the building. Inside the walls and pillars are covered by frescos, in some part well preserved. The stone, when emerges, appears more grey than the outside. The vaults are smoothed by plaster or concrete, with a light ochre colour.

Similar materials characterize the lower space, with the difference in the lack of frescos and in the fact that the pavement is here more rough, in stone, while in the main space it appears as newer, in stone with red-yellow shades. The furniture of the church are realized in wood.



182, 183. *The crypt*

NOTES CHAPTER 4

- 1 Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* [Le Città invisibili.], Harvest/HBJ ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1974), 96-97.
- 2 Teddy Kollek and Moshe Pearlman, *Jerusalem; a History of Forty Centuries*, American ed. (New York: Random House, 1968), 12.
- 3 One reference is the Bunting Clover Leaf Map (1581), today in the National Library of Israel.
- 4 See also Appendix B. In 1860 started the construction of the first neighbourhood outside the walls, Yemin Moshe Ibid., 228-229
- 5 Data from David Amiran and Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, "Geography in Israel," *A Collection of Papers Offered to the 23rd International Bibliography of Periodical Literature* 131 (1976)., reported by Kirsten Pedersen, *The History of the Ethiopian Community in the Holy Land from the Time of Emperor Tewodros II Till 1974* (Jerusalem: Ecumenical Institute for Theological Research, 1983), 43.
- 6 Kollek and Pearlman, *Jerusalem; a History of Forty Centuries*, 15
- 7 Ibid., 34
- 8 Ibid., 70
- 9 The World Zionist Movement was founded in the first Zionist congress, held in Basel in 1897 Ibid., 230
- 10 In the same time period the Christian population passed from 2750 to 13000 and the Muslim one from 4000 to 12000. Data from Amiran and Ben-Arieh, *Geography in Israel*, reported by Pedersen, *The History of the Ethiopian Community in the Holy Land from the Time of Emperor Tewodros II Till 1974*, 43
- 11 Kollek and Pearlman, *Jerusalem; a History of Forty Centuries*, 224
- 12 Martin Gilbert, *Jerusalem in the Twentieth Century* (London: Pimlico, 1997), 63.
- 13 Ibid., 46
- 14 Ibid., 82-84
- 15 Ibid., 151
- 16 Kollek and Pearlman, *Jerusalem; a History of Forty Centuries*, 236-240
- 17 Gilbert, *Jerusalem in the Twentieth Century*, 71

- 18 Ibid., 174
- 19 Ibid., 224, 249-250
- 20 The access was previously part of the armistice but, in fact, was never permitted Ibid., 240-242
- 21 On the 23rd of June, 1969 5000 Muslims prayed on the *Haram*, including many Israeli-Arabs that for 20 years couldn't reach the holy site Ibid., 224, 249-295
- 22 Ibid., 224, 298-300
- 23 Ibid., 325
- 24 Ibid., 328
- 25 Daniel K. Eisenbud, Herb Keinon and Anna Ahronheim, "Jerusalem Ramming Attack: Four Killed as Truck Rams into IDF Soldiers," *The Jerusalem Post* 08/01/2017, .
- 26 "PM Rabin- Inauguration Jerusalem 3000 in Washington," , accessed 01/17, 2017, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFA-Archive/1990-1995/Pages/PM%20Rabin-%20Inauguration%20Jerusalem%203000%20in%20Washingto.aspx>.
- 27 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* [Vers une architecture.] (New York: Dover Publications, 1986; 1931), 19.
- 28 In particular I refer to the book: David Kroyanker, *Jerusalem A Guide to Neighborhoods and Buildings (in Hebrew)* (Ben Shemen: Keter, 1996).
- 29 Could be interesting to deepen this issue, in relation with the idea of the lack of the Jewish Temple
- 30 Concept developed in chapter 2.B and 3.A
- 31 Pedersen, *The History of the Ethiopian Community in the Holy Land from the Time of Emperor Tewodros II Till 1974 (Ecumenical Institute for Theological Research, 1983)* , 45
- 32 See Appendix B
- 33 Ibid., 44
- 34 Christine Chaillot, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Tradition : A Brief Introduction to its Life and Spirituality* (Paris: Inter-Orthodox Dialogue, 2002), 101-103.
- 35 Kollek and Pearlman, *Jerusalem; a History of Forty Centuries* , 155-156

36 David Reznik, *David Reznik: A Retrospective* (The Genia Schreiber University Art Gallery, 2005), 44.

37 Michael Govan et al., *James Turrell: A Retrospective* (Los Angeles; New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art ;DelMonico Books, imprint of Prestel, 2013), 97.

38 See chapter 3.C

39 It is also true that there is a viewpoint in the garden from which is possible to see the roof of this space, understanding its nature and revealing the “trick” of its minimum thickness close to the skylight

40 See again chapter 3.C to deepen this Turrell's concept

41 The informations about this building are taken from the written description provided by the synagogue community that manage the complex

42 In regards to the topic of the artificial lighting in the religious spaces it is interesting the point of view of the photographer Pino Musi, expressed in the conversation I had with him, presented in the Appendix A

43 The mentioned description reports that this solution is adopted to avoid to create the figure of a cross

44 Reznik, *David Reznik: A Retrospective*, 113-115

45 Ibid., 113-115

46 Ibid., 113-115

47 Ibid., 113-115

48 Denys Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Corpus*, Vol. 3 (Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 72.

49 The core of the church presented an altar and was not paved to leave visible the footprint of Christ, in the dust, as reported by Ibid., 72

50 Ibid., 86-87

51 Ibid., 75-76

52 These two round elements were adde in the 16th-century Ibid., 77

53 Ibid., 81

54 Ibid., 82

55 The informations are taken from the written description provided by the cultural heritage ministry, placed next to the monuments.

56 Irena Zantovska Murray, *Moshe Safdie : Buildings and Projects, 1967-1992*, eds. Irena Zantovska Murray and others (Montreal ; London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 122.

57 Denys Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Corpus*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press,

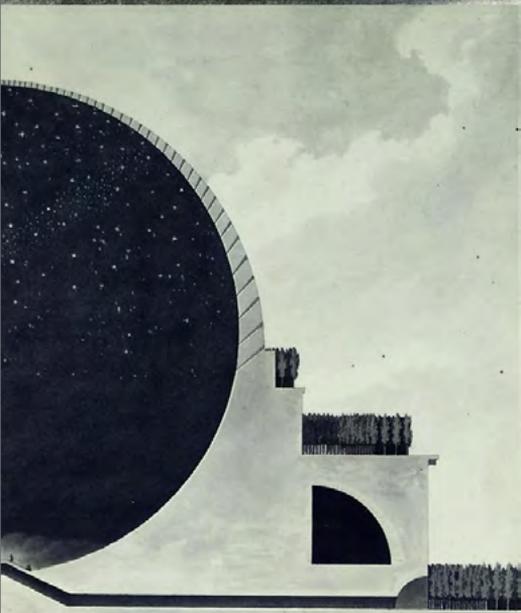
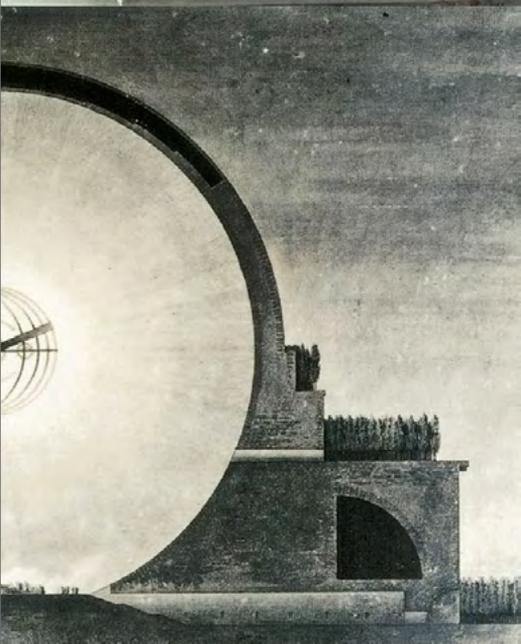
2009), 86-87.

58 Ibid., 86-87

59 Ibid., 90-91

60 About the artificial lighting of religious spaces is very interesting the point of view and the work of the photographer Pino Musi, interviewed in the appendix A.

61 Denys Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Corpus*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 7-8.



CHAPTER 5
THE SPACE OF THE SPIRIT

5.A _ PRINCIPLES AND ELEMENTS

5.B _ THE SPACE OF THE SPIRIT

5.A _ PRINCIPLES AND ELEMENTS

“The long path from material through function to creative work has only a single goal: to create order out of the desperate confusion of our time. We must have order allocating to each thing its due according to its nature. We should do this so perfectly that the world of our creations will blossom from within. We want no more. We can do no more. Nothing can express the aim and meaning of our work better than the profound words of St Augustine:”Beauty is the splendor of Truth”

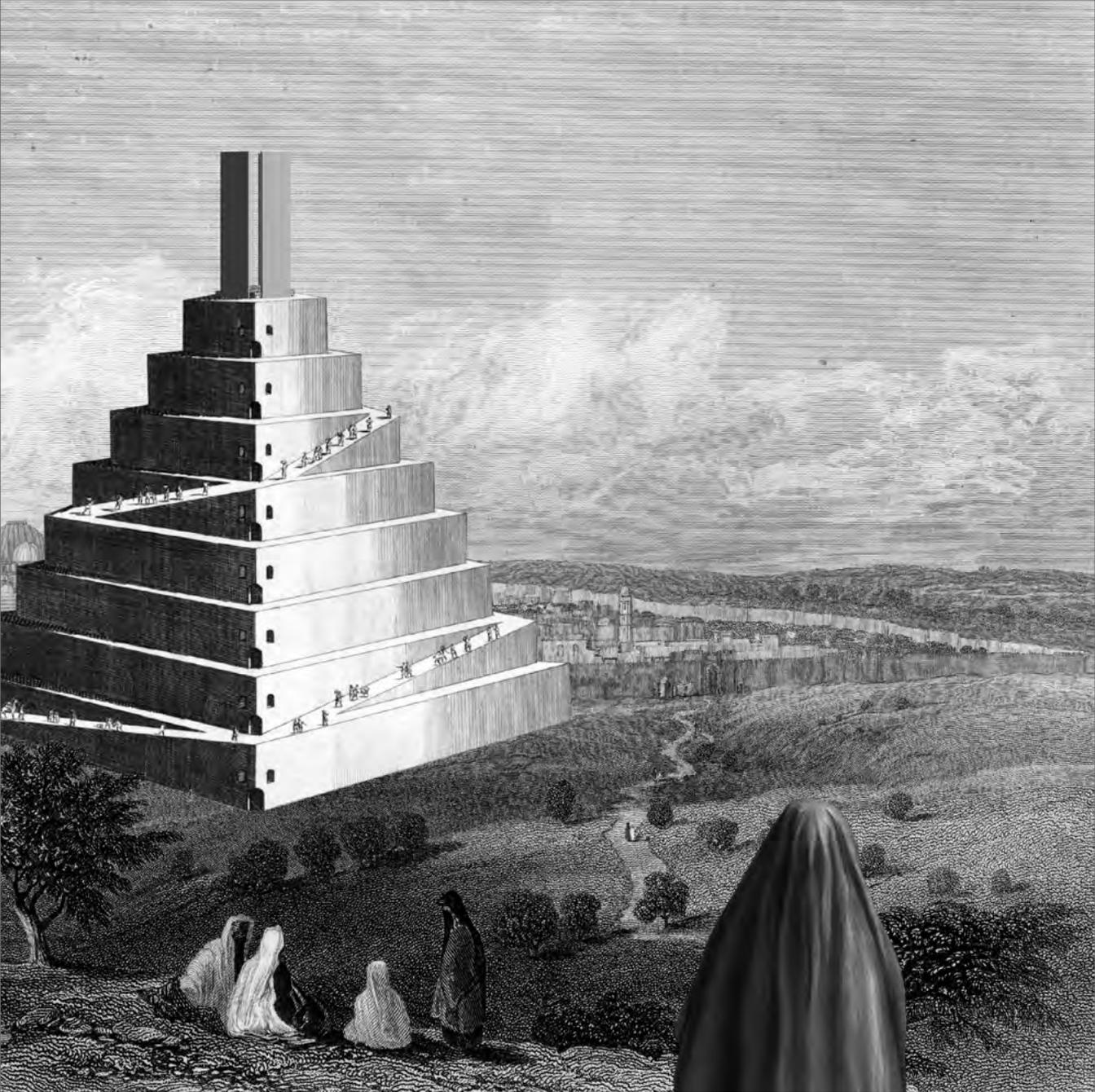
Ludwig Mies van der Rohe¹

I hope you will understand that architecture has nothing to do with the inventions of forms. It is not a playground for children, young or old. Architecture is the real battleground of the spirit. Architecture wrote the history of the epochs and gave them their names. Architecture depends on its time. It is the crystallization of its inner structure, the slow unfolding of its form.

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe²

Arrived at the end of this “architectural trip through spirituality”, it is time to take stock of what has been explored, in order to derive some practical principle to apply in an architectural project. Many theoretical contributions and artistic-architectural spaces have been consider, in the direction of an idea of universal spirituality expressed through the space. As this idea, even when dealing with universality, moved from a subjective point of view, also the selection of these contributions has been subjective and the principles that derive can't be different than that.

At the same time we should consider the point of view of Roger Scruton, according to which aesthetic judgement is always rooted in subjective experience, but at the same time objectivity and universality, in the aesthetic field, come apart, differently for instance from the scientific field, and “cultural variation does not imply the absence of cross-cultural universals [...] rooted in our nature [...] into our rational interests at a very fundamental level”³. Scruton observes that principles such as symmetry, order, proportion, harmony have deeply changed along history in the object to which they refer to, but, as ideas, have been



184. *Spiritual levels*,
2016

permanent holding on human psyche⁴.

Leaving aside for a while these considerations, that will be the core of the next conclusive chapter, I think it is important to formulate the architectural principles and the elements related, that can be derived from this short research.

The first aspect that comes to mind is that all the spaces considered are based on simple and recognisable, I would say archetypical, forms, re-calling the idea of order. These forms are then combined in systems that in many cases become

very complex, giving shape to an architectural landscape very rich in spatial solutions, but characterized by harmony. In this complexity the fundamental elements are the boundary and the threshold, being able to identify the limits and the passages, the levels of “sacred-spiritual” and the expectation related with. They separate the “inside and outside”, recalling Hans van der Laan and the “sacred and profane”, with Eliade⁵.

A not planar movement in the space, natural or artificial, is then a second element able to mark spaces, create climax and create more delicate “thresholds” between the spaces and levels. If on one hand an ascending movement has always been associate to getting closer to a trascendental dimension, descending movement are not rare in spiritual spaces, marking a moment of passage, far from the ordinary. Ascending movement link with the idea of sky, related with the primordial action of observation of the celestial vault, while descending movements link with the idea of earth, origin of life in Eliade’s thought⁶. Both the sky and the earth represent an idea of infinite, of something “wholly other”.

The feeling of the mysterious, recalling Otto’s thought⁷, is also central, leading on one side to a material curiosity on the other beyond it, opening a link to a trascendental dimension. The darkness, or even better the semi-darkness as Otto suggests⁸, is a central element of the feeling of the mysterious, but relevant is also the role of the “mysterious objects”, what is initially not understandable. In opposition to the darkness is the light, always element of “truth”, divine, superior dimension.

In many examples the presence of water have been central, element of “purification” or, avoiding too religious concepts, of a new beginning. At the same time water is often also mysterious, slipping away from a fully understand of its depth, its movement, its quality.

The sound, only partially considered and only in the descriptions of the spaces I directly experienced, has also a very important role, even if it seems always hard to deal with this element in an architectural project, even more when it is just an academic one. The only observation I feel to do is that in many cases the soundproofing of the spaces is able to enforce a dimension of focus and meditation, concentrating all the attention in the space itself, just as the visual direction often does.

The colour (and the material) of the space is then another element that not always get the attention its deserve, but it is central its role of enforcing (or contradict)⁹ what the shape of the space suggests.

All this principles are considered from the point of view of the perception of the space, its experience, where the starting point is represented by the senses

and the position that human body assumes in the space, as suggested by Hans van der Laan¹⁰.

Finally, apart from these practical elements, the main principle that in my opinion should lead nowadays the project of a “Space of the Spirit”, is once more the one of the Kantian “purposiveness without purpose”¹¹.

This research have occupied my mind for more than one year, seeking what



185. First skecth
for the Space
of the Spirit,
oct. 2015



5.B _ THE SPACE OF THE SPIRIT

“The more immoral and brutal the present time, the more spiritual and delicate I have to make my work. That is strength.”

Otto Freundlich¹²

“Architecture lasts because it is art and surpasses its use”

Gio Ponti¹³

I called “the Space of the Spirit”. On this very wide topic, necessarily, it has been more what has been excluded than included, due to the time and a certain need of coherence. Many sparks are then presents for continuing deepening the topic, seen this research just as a partial starting point.

In parallel, in the last five months in which I went deeper in exploring this concepts, I developed an architectural proposal, that represents just an attempt and a partial answer to the topics considered.

The writing of this thesis has not followed the logical sequence in which it is presented and has been very fascinating finding step by step theoretical and practical confirmations to the first hypothesis, just foreseen in the beginning. At the same time things that now appear in logical sequence had represented for me moments of wonder, when, for instance, writing chapter 2, I found important theoretical confirmations to elements that I had already grasped dealing with chapter 3 in the previous weeks.

The elements and principles derived have been stated in the last chapter, but in order to proceed considering the architectural proposal it is still important to make some considerations. The central question now is: how is it possible to express the universality in a determinate context, in a determinate time? It is clear that this is absolutely necessary, as architecture deals with context and present, in the hope that also the future can find place in it.

We can re-call here the point of view of Otto, that consider a direct experience

186. *Light*,
2016.
Abu Gosh,
Israel

of the sacred the only way to access the numinous¹⁴, but also Eliade's recognition that man's reaction to nature is conditioned by culture and history, however this doesn't prevent the possibility to seek permanent expressions of what he defines as "the sacred"¹⁵. Going further on this direction, Natale Spineto, speaking about Ries and his strong connection with the same Eliade, affirms that the *homo religiosus* is always the same but always different in the different cultures and ages, as the history gives new occasions to reflect about the meaning of things, and as he is a pragmatic man whose reference to the sacred can exist just in specific cultural contexts¹⁶.

If objectivity, as already noticed in the aesthetic field¹⁷, can't find a space, I should declare that this is a project for the nowadays man, based on my subjective experience, in the specific context of Jerusalem. But, in order to shape it, has been necessary to explore the human experiences of the past, favouring the recurring ones, framing a subjective but pondered idea of universality. It is an attempt to which just the future can give value or finding it outdated, as the historic course is fundamental when dealing with permanencies.

"Culture represents an investment over many generations"¹⁸ writes Scruton, and the temptation to desecrate the burden of a given culture is each time more present in our society, towards an idea of freedom¹⁹. This apparent "freedom" reveals itself as the completely lack of search for a deeper meaning, of a other dimension able to gather beyond the immediate, in the realm of the short-term pleasure and what the philosopher calls "kitsch" and "addiction to effect", for him the main enemy of happiness²⁰, totally far from what art and beauty is:

"For us who live in the aftermath of the kitsch epidemic, therefore, art has acquired a new importance. It is the real presence of our spiritual ideals. That is why art matters. Without the conscious pursuit of beauty we risk falling into a world of addictive pleasures and routine desecration, a world in which the worthwhileness of human life is no longer clearly perceivable."²¹

Before concluding, I think can be helpful considering the point of view of the religion historian Lindsay Jones, in his work *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*. He suggests that every building, also when not intentionally, is a bearer of many symbols, meanings and significance, that go out of the control of its designer, especially when it comes to "long-lasting religious constructions"²². To express it with a vivid image, he quotes Bernard Tschumi, that writes:

"Architecture resembles a masked figure. It cannot be easily unveiled. It is always hiding. [...] Once you uncover that which lies behind the mask, it is only to discover another mask [...] Masks hide other masks, and each successive level of meaning confirms the impossibility

187. *Desert shrine*,
2017.
Judaean desert,
West Bank



of grasping reality.”²³

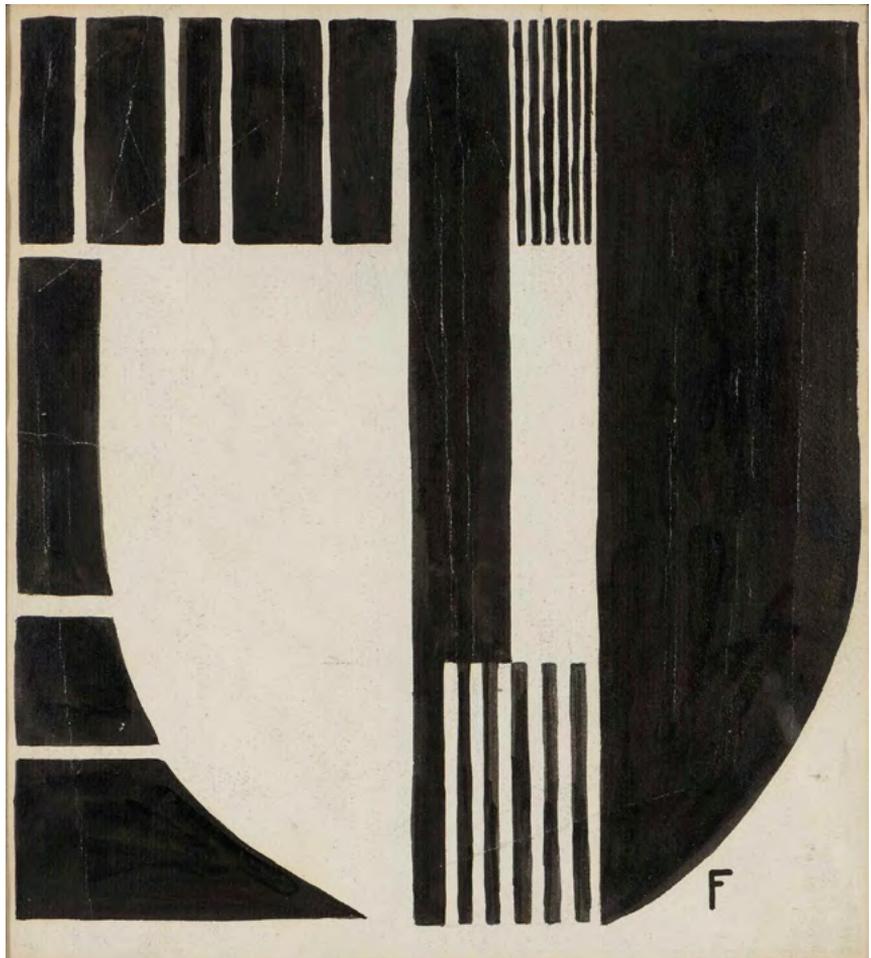
Also the modernist concept of the “universal man” is for Jones not relevant anymore, because the “universal man” has never existed and the modernist process of suppressing symbols and metaphors in order to create “univalent forms” moves from a point of view of architecture as an object independent from reality and context²⁴. What Jones promotes is a different approach to architecture, in which the focus is not on the building itself but on the human experience of it, in terms of occasions and situations more than the psychology of the visitor²⁵. What the author suggests is an approach that change an idea of “seeing” or “reading” buildings with one of a “conversation” or a “play” with them, discovering all their potential and bringing people taking part in them, also and even more when it comes to sacred architecture²⁶. Play is not a lack of seriousness, but on the contrary, the rules of a game and its limits create seriousness. By accepting them, people make a first act of attention and, committing to them, a first necessary step towards the possibility of contemplation, losing consciousness of themselves²⁷. The words of Jones related with this concept re-call many of the issues considered along this research:

“When worshipers enter the closed world of a ritual-architectural event, and commit to abiding by the rules of that game, they accept a significant loss of control, surrendering cautions disinterest and exposing themselves to the as yet unknown consequences.”²⁸

This leads necessarily to the need of considering architecture not as a finished form or project but in a continuous process that, from its creation, keeps of getting enriched by different points of view, symbols, meanings, from different ages and cultures. This leads to the plurality and richness of meanings that just a useless works can have, as useful elements usually have just one meaning, that lies in their function. As pointed out by the art historian George Kubler:

“useful inventions alter mankind only indirectly by altering his environment; aesthetic inventions enlarge human awareness directly with new ways of experiencing the universe, rather than with new objective interpretations.”²⁹

Is it possible thou to imagine nowadays what is the Space of the Spirit? Can contemplation become the direct and purposeful experience of architecture, promoting a spiritual attitude towards it, as the same Jones suggests³⁰? Can the architecture become an occasion of connecting the rational and irrational elements of our existence, similar to what happens, following Otto’s thought, in a song, where music and words are able to represent the experience of these two categories³¹?



188. Otto Freundlich,
*Thesis, synthesis,
antithesis*,
1937

I think the answer is yes, if a project, aware of its limits and of its potential of further meanings, is led by a “disinterested interested”, a free offer moved by love (the base of any knowledge according to the mentioned work of Scheler³²) and by the awareness that universal concepts such as beauty and spiritual need, changing shapes throughout history, have a permanent and subsequently universal value. Only like this, a project can move away from its limits, towards a transcendent dimension (not necessary religious in the strict sense), far from the contemporary materialism that condemns men to their finiteness.

This is, in my opinion, the way to discover the “utility of the useless”³³, so necessary today.

NOTES CHAPTER 5

1 Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig, "Inaugural Address as Director of Architecture at Armour Institute of Technology" 1938, 1938). quoted by Philip C. Johnson, *Mies Van Der Rohe* (Secker, 1978), 199-200.

2 Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig, "ID Merger Speech" (Chicago, Mies van der Rohe Society, 17/04/1950, 2012).

3 Roger Scruton, *Beauty : A very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 118-120.

4 Ibid., 118-120

5 See chapters 2.B and 2.C

6 See chapter 2.B

7 See chapter 2.B

8 See chapter 2.B

9 See chapter 3.C

10 See chapter 2.C

11 See chapter 2.C

12 From the exhibition "The shadow of colour", Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 22/12/16 – 22/04/17

13 Quoted by Lindsay Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison* (Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 2000), 117 vol.1.

14 The sensory experience is not fundamental for him, but can play an important starting point. See chapter 2.B

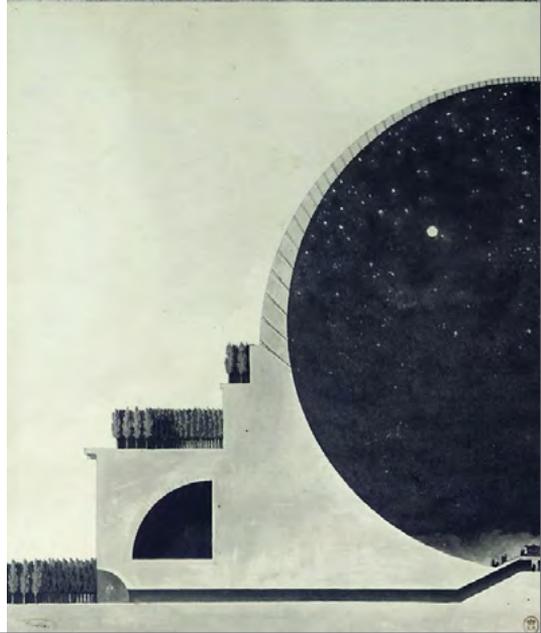
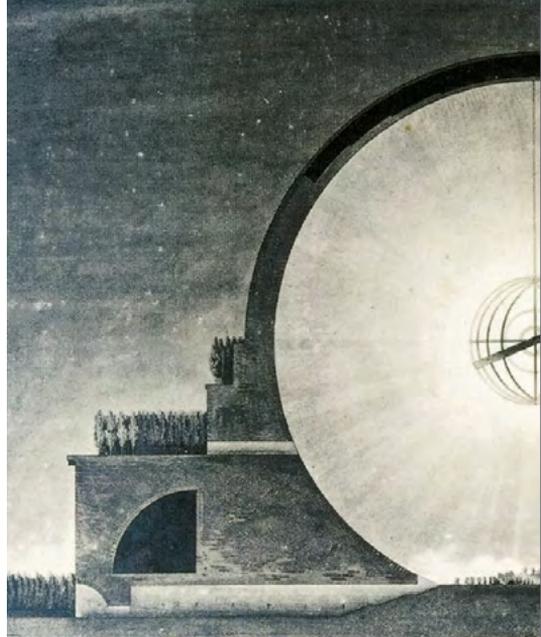
15 Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane; the Nature of Religion* [Sacré et le profane.], American ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 15-16.

16 Natale Spineto, "Julien Ries e La Fondazione Di Un'Antropologia Del Sacro," in *L'Antropologia Religiosa Di Fronte Alle Espressioni Della Cultura e Dell'Arte: Il Contributo Di Julien Ries Alla Storia Delle Religioni Atti Del Colloquio Internazionale, Università Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore, Milano, 19 Febbraio 2008 R. Boyer ... [Et Al.]*, ed. Natale Spineto (Milano: Jaca book, 2009), 97.

17 See chapter 5.A

18 Scruton, *Beauty : A very Short Introduction* , 152

- 19 Ibid., 149-153
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid., 160
- 22 Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison*, 22-26, 29 vol.1
- 23 Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 90,94. quoted by Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison*, 24 vol.1
- 24 Ibid., 26-28 vol.1
- 25 Ibid., 39-41 vol.1
- 26 Ibid., 44-48 vol.1
- 27 Ibid., 52-54 vol.1
- 28 Ibid., 53 vol.1
- 29 George Alexander Kubler, *The Shape of Time. Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1962), 14-16. quoted by Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison*, 118 vol.1
- 30 Ibid., 214-216 vol.2
- 31 Rudolf Otto, *Il Sacro*, ed. Ernesto Buonaiuti, trans. Ernesto Buonaiuti (Milano: SE, 2009), 67-69.
- 32 See chapter 2.C
- 33 See chapter 1.B



APPENDIX A
CONVERSATIONS



CONVERSATIONS

The idea of having short conversations with different relevant personalities came in the beginning of this work, with the aim of “testing” some of the hypothesis developed. Talking with people that, through their experience, have been able to get deeper in certain topics, could help me to gain a wider view on the contexts and situations that I was starting to meet and in which I worked.

At the same time I felt since the beginning the need of finding in particular people coming from Arabic groups, and mainly Muslim: dealing with spirituality in Jerusalem I had the need of considering the strong identities present but, while the Christian culture could be perceived as closer to my background (even if then I found many and very different streams) and for the Jewish one I knew I would have been constantly surrounded by it (even if there are deep diversities between the different groups), the Islamic culture needed a more intentional seek.

I thought that different religious guides would be the perfect people to speak with, in order to get through their eyes a wide view over the community they represent and over the spiritual meanings of their different faiths. The time available and some need of “impartiality” moved me away from this idea, realizing at the end this short appendix, in which just personalities had a conversation with me around their works, their visions.

They don't represent a community but just themselves, but talking with them I could see how they really matured a deep and wide view about the topics we discussed. I would say that these people have developed an “expanded eye”, borrowing this term from the last architecture Biennale and recalling its image of a ladder to climb in order to observe a broader horizon, a new viewpoint. Talking with them I got to enter deeper in the meanings of my research, I developed new points of view and I could finally find some confirmations that the main assumptions of my thesis could be shared among other peoples.

189. Bruce Chatwin,
*Maria Reiche (cover
image of the XV
architecture Biennale,
Reporting from
the Front, 2016),*
1974.
Nazca,
Perù

WITH PINO MUSI

I had the pleasure to talk with the Italian photographer Pino Musi on the 10th of January, through a Skype conversation between Jerusalem and his studio in Paris. Observing the works of this photographer, I had the impression that they express many topics related with the ones of my research. They seem to me to refer, through architecture, to an eternal condition, out of time. In particular, I was impressed by a series of three works that he realized for a publication by FMR, *Italia. Bellezza Eterna, Italia. Bellezza e Fede* and a work about the ancient Greece.

During the conversation Musi explained me how this value is a not completely conscious reflect of his research. At the base of his work there is an idea of *pietas*, towards the human kind, whose presence is always assumed but never directly seen.

This happens not only in the works related with architecture, but also in others such as *Hybris* (2009), a work about the time, in which he represents operating theatres just few minutes after a surgery and before it has been cleaned. The art critic Stefania Zuliani wrote that this work is the representation of a theatre without actors, presented *post factum*, where the dense absence gives the full meaning of the action that took place, of the people that “acted”, and the use of black and white prevents a superficial “emotionalism”.

A similar feeling of a human presence just perceived comes from another Musi’s work, *Biologie de l’Acte d’Écrire* (2002), in which he represents ancient manuscripts and modern handwritten notes, a medium between two people, the writer and the reader, that are not present. The art historian and critic Flaminio Gualdoni related this work with the architectural ones, finding in the “sacred” the common denominator. Musi is a photographer of the sacred, according to Gualdoni, element that passes throughout all the his images, from the representations of temples and churches, to the ones of apparently very distant objects, such as the industrial spaces of *Oxymoron* (1998).

Musi puts at the centre of his work the light and even more the shadow, in a slow and meditative photographic process, or ritual, as he suggests. His images requires time to be fully revealed, a time that, as he told me, is far from the one of the web: his site is a diary of his works, not a functional or commercial mean,

organized in chapters that cross different years, with the collection of the critical texts that has been written for every series. It is an invitation to pause, to enter deeper in each work and in every picture.

The images of Musi are not related with documentation, with a need of memory, also when it comes to architecture. They often explore a possibility, a personal interpretation of the author. In the work that he made about the architecture of Terragni, Musi goes deeper to an interpretation of the meaning of his drawings, the original idea that transpires from them, in what he calls *Ipotesi (su Terragni)* (2002). About this work, Carlo Bertelli wrote that “The most exciting quality in Pino Musi’s images is his lucid gaze, whose enchanting essentiality hints at an ancient, still very present, higher Italian tradition, namely the ideal City of Urbino and its architecture offered for contemplation, meditation, with no other purpose than the message of perfection.”

(english text follows)

Signor Musi, la fotografia, mezzo principe per esprimere l'attimo, fermare il momento decisivo, nel suo lavoro sembra invece andare alla ricerca dell'eterno, delle origini, di una condizione fuori dal tempo.

Si, spesso nelle mie foto il momento viene dilatato, rallentato, raffreddato. Il mio è un lavoro sugli interstizi del tempo, tra un accadimento ed un altro, è un lavoro di attesa. Non sono alla ricerca del gesto virtuoso legato ad un tempo “catturato”, ma propendo verso una forma di creazione attenta alle sottili relazioni spaziali ed ai particolari. Chi fruisce le mie immagini, vorrei si ponesse quesiti durevoli, lontani dall’aver risposte certe, lontani dalla richiesta di un virtuosismo visivo dove la spettacolarità diventi elemento portante. La mia è una proposta di ricerca sottile, una ricerca senza “evidenze” marcate, ma con suggerimenti di percorsi, spesso laterali. Alcune immagini sono così sostanziali, asciugate di ogni orpello, da sembrare quasi elementari: è necessario osservarle con la lente dell’entomologo e prendersi il giusto tempo per esse, per tentarne comprensione.



190. Pino Musi,
Oximoron,
1998

Mi viene da pensare che queste fotografie siano un invito a “meditare”, ma al tempo stesso anche un suo processo di meditazione. Allora può forse succedere che l'architettura e la fotografia, che hanno in comune spazio, luce e materia, ad un certo punto registrino la possibilità che l'oggetto architettonico diventi indipendente e la fotografia possa trasformarsi in un “altro” momento di meditazione, partendo comunque dall'oggetto architettonico reale. Ho trovato più volte citata da lei una frase di Pessoa che dice che “I viaggi sono i viaggiatori. Ciò che vediamo non è ciò vediamo, ma ciò che siamo”. Il suo lavoro è quindi anche una sorta di viaggio interiore?

Assolutamente sì, ed è collegato alla mia idea di architettura, che comprende la valenza sacra. Con la fotografia mi interessa scavare una possibilità di “senso” del soggetto proiettando su di esso il mio immaginario, non mi interessa descriverlo girandogli solamente intorno. Per me la fotografia diventa scrittura, nella misura in cui il fotografo si pone, quantomeno, nella condizione di interpretarne la

sostanza. Non mi è mai interessato fare fotografia come la vediamo nelle riviste di genere, per le quali il fotografo diventa il “cantore” dell’architetto, documentando il maggior numero di elementi di una sua architettura.

Io uso il bianco e nero ed un sistema di forme che a volte può virare pericolosamente verso l’astrazione. Io tento di restare su un confine sottile, senza cadere dall’altra parte. Il bianco e nero sottrae le valenze decorative al soggetto; il colore fotografico (nel peggiore dei casi), tentando una mimesi col colore reale, crea un’ulteriore confusione di lettura. Apprezzo il colore in autori che si distaccano completamente da ogni velleità di mimetismo, amo il colore quando ha la leggerezza dell’aria. Nel mio lavoro sugli Scavi di Pompei, luogo a cui si associa immediatamente il “rosso pompeiano”, il mio bianco/nero ha permesso di concentrare l’attenzione sullo spazio dell’*urbe*, sulle relazioni dei volumi, sulle articolazioni delle strade, scavando dentro la dimensione domestica. Come già detto a me interessa affrontare temi sostanziali, nell’architettura e nell’architettura sacra, non considerare la fotografia come linguaggio puramente descrittivo.

Ho realizzato un lavoro su Terragni in cui mi interessavano le ipotesi progettuali del grande architetto, legate ai suoi disegni. Le riprese fotografiche frontali delle sue architetture sono state effettuate il giorno di ferragosto, in un paesaggio silente. Successivamente le fotografie sono state sottoposte ad un processo di ritocco digitale, non fine a se stesso, non gratuito, che a volte metto in campo su progetti dove lo spessore concettuale è preponderante e dove si gioca una partita ambigua: lavorare direttamente sulle immagini per evidenziare i concetti portanti, ma senza sottolineature evidenti di manipolazione. Non si percepisce, in questo lavoro, l’intervento di postproduzione in nessuna foto, tutto “sembra” credibile pur nella sua alterazione.

Lavorando nelle chiese per un libro sulle origini della cristianità, ho percepito la violenza fortissima che un’illuminazione artificiale maldestra fa subire ai luoghi sacri, a queste straordinarie architetture. Ho allora imposto che mi si spegnessero tutte quelle orribili lampade kitsch. Volevo lasciar vivere solo la luce naturale, che chiaramente è cambiata con le superfetazioni architettoniche avute nel tempo, dal Medioevo in avanti. Questi luoghi immersi nella luce naturale hanno ripreso a respirare ed a riavvolgersi in un’atmosfera intima che potremmo davvero definire sacra. Successivamente ho cancellato nelle fotografie tutte le fonti di luce artificiale, riportando l’immagine del “tempio” alla sua espressività originale, restituendo dignità alla penombra, alla sua funzione portante per un luogo di raccoglimento. Poi, la luce naturale avvolgente, le proiezioni sulle pareti che avvengono in alcuni orari, rimandano a quello che tu chiami “concetto di eterno”. Questa condizione meditativa, insita nella sostanza di questi spazi, non sarà mai raggiungibile con



191. Pino Musi,
Oximoron,
1998

un'illuminazione artificiale. Nel migliore dei casi questa potrebbe diventare una luce scenografica, teatrale, ma non servirebbe nelle chiese, salvo in alcuni casi per le Basiliche, per la grande scala...ma è un lavoro di illuminotecnica improbo, che ho visto risolto pochissime volte.

Il "funzionale" è un tema centrale della mia tesi. Quello che sto cercando di affermare in ultima istanza è infatti che la funzionalità dell'architettura non si sposa bene con questa ricerca di una condizione "eterna".

La condizione dell'ombra è ancora più importante di quella della luce. Se si legge, per esempio, il *Libro d'ombra* di Tanizaki, si ritrova una riflessione sostanziale sull'ombra, su come è questa a "costruire" la dimensione meditativa, intima, in uno spazio architettonico. Io parto da questo presupposto nel mio lavoro. Sono portanti le masse d'ombra all'interno delle mie immagini e la luce vive di contrappunto a queste masse, non viceversa. Il bianco / nero mi permette, poi, di scavare dentro i dettagli dell'ombra, o di renderla più avvolgente. Quest'ombra è sempre abbastanza aperta, dentro vi si possono leggere cose, ma fino ad un certo punto. E' come se, nell'ombra, le cose avessero una loro fiocchissima luminanza interna. La luce quasi sempre esibisce segni, nell'ombra quegli stessi riconquistano la loro ambiguità, riportandoli al mistero, o ad una condizione sacrale, appunto. Non amo i contrasti forti, non amo la luce drammatica. Quello che amo ora è una grande "palette" di grigi; ritrovare nelle fotografie la dolcezza anche nelle situazioni di luce più dura, come quella solare.

Ho notato che nei suoi lavori ogni tanto c'è un'attenzione al dettaglio, isolato, un elemento architettonico come le colonne del Pantheon o i capitelli di San Vitale, o un "oggetto" come l'acquasantiera della chiesa di Botta a Sartirana, altre volte c'è invece la visione d'insieme, come le foto di Delfi o della chiesa sul Monte Tamaro...

Non mi interessa il dettaglio strutturale, il dettaglio di design. Mi interessa che nel dettaglio ci sia il senso del tutto. Un microcosmo dove ritrovare i valori dell'Architettura, il suo senso profondo. Sia nel dettaglio, sia nell'immagine larga, non devo perdere questo carattere interpretativo. Non credo che la foto di dettaglio debba asservire la progressione di un raccontino sull'architettura, in cui c'è la foto d'angolo, il fronte, poi alcuni dettagli, poi il rapporto nel contesto, ecc. ecc. Le mie fotografie non sono didascalie, non vogliono raccontare in modo elementare l'architettura, vogliono essere un testo critico, uno spunto di riflessione sull'architettura.

Del lavoro che ho fatto a Ronchamp una foto famosissima è quella della *poignée*. Questa immagine è esplicitiva di quello che ho appena detto: lì c'è un microcosmo, è un dettaglio ma sembra di essere in un paesaggio. La scala è ribaltata.

Tutto questo mi fa pensare ai lavori di Carlo Scarpa, ha mai avuto occasione di fotografarli?

Forse ci sarà l'occasione, ma siccome sono stati iper-fotografati, da nomi illustri della fotografia italiana come Ghirri, Guidi, credo che sia stato già fatto un grande lavoro. Preferisco allora andare in altre direzioni. Lavorare con giovani architetti che sperimentano o confrontarmi con altri le cui architetture forniscono al mio immaginario linfa costante, come ad esempio Tadao Ando, o su figure più ibride, che hanno attraversato i linguaggi artistici del novecento come Carlo Mollino, su cui sto portando a termine un enorme lavoro che diventerà presto un libro.

Ho trovato interessante che le sue immagini, legate a questi temi di cui abbiamo parlato, abbiano a che fare con luoghi come i templi greci o Ronchamp. Sono luoghi centrali nella mia ricerca architettonica perché credo abbiano qualcosa da dire in un'idea universale di spiritualità, di eterno. Oggi fotografare questi luoghi, che comprendono più di 2000 anni di storia, significa forse metterli sullo stesso piano e indagare il loro comune denominatore, l'eterno che rappresentano.

Absolutamente, e l'antica Grecia in modo particolare. Dipende però da come ti poni nella riscrittura di questi luoghi. A molti fotografi interessa il tema del conflitto con l'attualità, la trasformazione di questi luoghi attraverso le varie barbarie, dal morde e fuggi turistico agli attentati terroristici. Io preferisco un altro contraddittorio, che lavora su due fronti: uno più interno alle logiche degli studi archeologici, più legato alle tematiche irrisolte interne all'opera, e l'altro dove la fotografia tende a donare a questi luoghi l'immagine di un tempo sospeso, un'aurea che supera i drammi e le contingenze. Ho fotografato i templi greci alle 5 di mattina o alle 8 di sera, non a caso, dopo l'assalto delle orde turistiche, altrimenti sarebbe diventata per me una sofferenza l'atto del fotografare. E' stato straordinario stare nella Biblioteca di Efeso prima della sua apertura al pubblico, con una luce appena dorata che iniziava ad avvolgere l'architettura. Il lavoro sull'antica Grecia ho voluto realizzarlo anche parzialmente a colori, una delle poche volte, proprio perché avevo l'esigenza di un "sentire" diverso.

E per provare a trasmettere anch'io il colore dell'aria...



192. Pino Musi,
Sito archeologico
di Delfi,
2010.
Greece

Mr. Musi, it seems to me that, in your work, photography, the principle medium to express the instant, to stop the decisive moment, is used to seek the eternal, the origins, a condition out of time.

Yes, often in my pictures the moment is expanded, slowed, cooled. My work is about time interstices, between an event and another, it is a waiting work. I do not seek the virtuous gesture connected to a time “captured”, but I tend towards a form of creation attentive to the subtle spatial relationships and to the details. I wish that who observe my images would ask himself durable questions, far from having definite answers, far from the request for a visual virtuosity where the spectacle becomes the focal element. Mine is a subtle research proposal, a search without “evidence” marked, but with suggestions of routes, often side paths. Some pictures are so substantial, without any frills, as to seem almost elementary: it is necessary to observe them through the entomologist’s lens and take the right time, to attempt to understand them.



193, 194. Pino Musi,
Notre Dame du Haut,
1996.
Ronchamp,
France

It occurs to me that these photographs are an invitation to “meditate”, but at the same time also a meditation process of you. Then architecture and photography, which share space, light and matter, at some point can register the possibility that the architectural object becomes independent and photography can become a moment of meditation, however, starting from ‘real architectural object. I found a quote from Pessoa cited by you that says: “Travel is the traveler. What we see isn’t what we see but what we are”. Is your work therefore a kind of inner journey?

Absolutely, and it is connected to my idea of architecture, which includes the sacred value. Through photography, I am interested in digging up a possibility of “sense” of the subject by projecting on it my imagery, I do not care to describe it turning around. For me photography is writing, to the extent that, at least, the photographer set himself in a position to interpret the substance. I was never interested in doing photography as we see in the magazines, for which the photographer becomes the architect’s “cantor”, documenting as many elements of an architecture by him.



I use the black and white and a system of forms that can sometimes turn dangerously towards abstraction. I try to stay on a fine boundary, without falling on the other side. The black and white subtracts decorative values from the subject; the photographic colour (at worst), when attempting a mimesis with the real colour, creates an additional reading confusion. I appreciate the colour in authors who are totally cut off from any ambition of mimicry, I love colour when it has the lightness of air. In my work on the Pompei's Excavations, place immediately associated with the "Pompeian red", my black / white made possible to focus the attention on the space of the *urbe*, on the volumes relationships, on the articulation of roads, exploring the domestic dimension. As already said I'm interested in dealing with substantial issues, in architecture and in the religious one, not considering photography as a purely descriptive language.

I made a work on Terragni in which I was interested in the design hypothesis of the great architect, related to his drawings. The frontal photo shoots of his architectures were realized on August 15th, in a quiet landscape. Later, photographs were subjected to a digital retouching process, not ending in itself, not groundless, that sometimes I put in the field on projects where the conceptual element is predominant and where is played an ambiguous game: to work directly on the images to highlight the fundamental concepts, but without making obvious the manipulation. In this work, the intervention of post-production is not perceived in any photo, everything "seems" credible, despite its alteration.

Working in the churches for a book on the origins of Christianity, I felt the very strong violence that artificial awkward lighting inflicts to the holy sites, to these extraordinary architecture. I then demanded that all those horrible kitsch lamps would be turned out. I wanted to just let living the natural light, that clearly has changed with the architectural accretions had over time, from the Middle Ages onwards. These places, surrounded by natural light, have begun to breathe again and to be wrapped in an intimate atmosphere that we could really define sacred. Afterwards, I deleted in the pictures all the artificial light sources, bringing back the image of the "temple" to its original expressiveness, restoring dignity to the semi-darkness, the load-bearing member for a place for reflection. Then, the enveloping natural light, the projections on the walls that take place at certain times, refer to what you call "the concept of eternity." This meditative condition, inherent in the substance of these spaces, can't ever be reached by artificial lighting. At best, this could become a spectacular light, theatrical, but it would not help in the churches, except in some cases for the basilicas, for the large-scale ... but it is a daunting lighting work, that I've seen very few times sorted out.

The "functional" is actually a central theme of my thesis. Ultimately what I'm



195. Pino Musi,
Basilica di Aquileia,
2011.
Italy

trying to say is that the architectural functionalism does not fit with the quest for an “eternal” condition.

The shadow condition is even more important than that of the light. If you read, for example, Tanizaki’s *In Praise of Shadows*, you would find a substantial reflection on the shadow, how is this to “build” the meditative dimension, intimate, in an architectural space. I start from this assumption in my work. In my images the grey masses are load-bearing and the light is the counterpoint to these masses, not vice versa. The black / white allows me, then, to dig in the shadow detail, or to make it more enveloping. This shadow is always quite open, inside it you can read things, but up to a certain point. It is as if, in the shadows, things had their feeble inner luminance. The light almost always exhibits signs, in the shadow they regain their ambiguity, bringing them back to the mystery, or to a sacral status, in fact. I do not love the strong contrasts, nor the dramatic light. What I love now is a big greys “palette”; I love to find in the photographs the sweetness, even under the toughest lighting, such as solar one.



196. Pino Musi,
Sito archeologico
di Efeso,
2014.
Turkey

I noticed that in your work sometimes there is an attention to detail, isolated, an architectural element as the columns of the Pantheon or the capitals of San Vitale, or an “object” as the font in the church at Sartirana by Botta, other times it is instead an overview, as the pictures of Delphi or of the church on Mount Tamaro...

I do not care about the structural detail, the design detail. I am interested in that in detail there is the sense of the whole. A microcosm where to find the values of Architecture, its deep meaning. Both in detail, both in the wide image, I must not miss this interpretative nature. I do not think that the detail photos should be made subservient to the progression of the architecture storytelling, in which there is the corner photo, the front, then some details, then the relationship in the context, etc. etc. My photographs are not captions, they do not want to tell the architecture in an elementary way, they want to be an essay, a starting point for a reflection on architecture.

In the work I did in Ronchamp, a famous picture is that of the *poignée*. This

image is explanatory of what I've just said: there is a microcosm, it is a detail but seems to be a landscape. The scale is reversed.

All this makes me think of the work of Carlo Scarpa. Have you ever had the opportunity to photograph them?

Perhaps there will be the opportunity to, but as they were hyper-photographed, by illustrious names of Italian photography as Ghirri, Guidi, I think it has already be done a great work. Then I prefer to go in other directions. Such as working with young architects who experiment or confronting with others whose architectures provide constant lymph to my imagery, such as Tadao Ando, or more hybrid figures, who have gone through the artistic languages of the twentieth century, such as Carlo Mollino, on which I am accomplishing an enormous work that will soon become a book.

I find it interesting that your images, related to the topics that we talked about, deal with places like the Greek temples or Ronchamp. They are central places in my architectural research because I think they have something to say in a universal idea of spirituality, of eternity. Photographing nowadays these places, that embrace more than 2000 years of history, perhaps means putting them on the same plane and investigate their common denominator, the eternal that they represent.

Absolutely, and ancient Greece in particular. But it depends on how you set yourself in the rewriting of these places. Many photographers are interested in the topic of the conflict with current events, the transformation of these places through the various barbarism, from the “touch and go” tourism to the terrorist attacks. I prefer a different opposition, working on two fronts: one inside the logic of the archaeological studies, more related to the internal unresolved issues of the work, and the other where the photograph tends to donate to these places an image of a suspended time, an aura that exceeds the dramas and contingencies. I photographed the Greek temples at 5 am and 8 pm, not by chance, after the assault of the tourist hordes, otherwise the act of photographing would have become for me a suffering. It was amazing to be in Ephesus Library before its opening to the public, with a just golden light that was beginning to envelop the architecture. I also decided to make the work on ancient Greece partially in colour, one of the few times, because I had the need for a different “feeling”.

And to try to convey the colour of the air ...

WITH AMER NATSHEH

I met Amer in Ramallah on the 26th of February. He showed me this city that, even if not very large (around 60000 inhabitants), is the core of the West Bank politics, with the governmental offices of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Amer is a professor of Psychology at the Friends School of Ramallah, a highbrow secondary institution founded in the end of the 19th-century and animated by Quakers principles, such as the equality of all the people and the development of the whole person in the physical, mental, spiritual and social dimension. However, this is not a “religious” institution and it is open to all the cultural origins, with a purpose of maintaining a presence of 30% Christian students, while the rest is mainly Muslim.

I thought that Amer could be the perfect person to help me gaining a better view of the Arabic culture, from the point of view of a person of my generation: he comes from a Muslim family from East Jerusalem, he is far from the faith in any religion, he studied Philosophy and Psychology in the UK and then Israeli and Middle Eastern Politics at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and now he lives in Ramallah, dealing everyday with young students with different backgrounds. Our conversation proved that the intuition was correct and we had a very interesting talk that touched sociological, political and cultural fields, through the lenses of our personal believes and existences. I have been pleasantly slightly surprised by getting to know that the existential questions, concerns, way of living, at least of the young people, are very similar to mine. Even if with different expressions and focus of interests, they seem to be the same in Ramallah and in the West Bank, as in Jerusalem or in Italy, enforcing the hope that the universal aspiration of my thesis can have a sense.

Amer, I asked to talk with you because I would like to enlarge my point of view on the different identities present in this place, and you can probably help me in this, especially about the Arabic-Palestinian culture. This even if you don't consider yourself as representing a specific group, and even less when it comes to religion, right?

No, probably not. I mean, of course there is always communality, there is



197. *Amer Natsheh,*
2017.
Ramallah

always things in common. I don't represent most Muslims in Palestine because I don't share their beliefs, but that doesn't mean I don't share their culture. I am not Muslim by belief but there are a lot of things that whether you like or not are part of your culture, like the Islamic culture. Even Christians in Palestine are Christian by faith but they are Muslim by culture.

So I believe that, and I feel that my age, I am 31, represents the younger generation of Palestine, where religion plays a minor role in life. For the older generation, I think, being a Muslim or being a Christian was a big deal in terms of how you behave, what you believe in, the fact that you have to pray, your outlook to the world. I think younger Palestinians are less religious, more nationalistic actually. I think nationalism became their own religion, we became more political aware than our grandparents, Palestine became our religion now.

Especially in big cities, to be secular became "hip", became an indication of modernity. Even if I wanted to be a good Muslim now, people would look down at me, would feel this is stupid. It is something you see a lot in the cities now, to prove that you are cultured and educated, you have to be secular. It is not the case with me, I lost faith in God much before. So yes, I would say I don't represent the older generation of Palestine.

You have then to understand that most Palestinians and Arabs that seem

to be religious, are not religious, they are conservative. There is a big difference between being conservative and religious: you see women here that cover their hair but wear extremely tight jeans, that it is anti-Islam. So why do they do this? Because it is tradition, you have to cover your hair but you don't really know why you have to cover your hair, what is the point for religion. A lot of people here, I would say, they are traditional and conservative, they are not really religious. You can sit down with many women covering their hair or *sheikh* with long beard and ask them questions about Islam, finding that they wouldn't know much. It is just that here reputation and tradition are very important: I have to cover my hair because if I don't my neighbour would speak bad about me. I would say that Palestinian society, for the most part, in the older generation is very traditional, not very religious. Of course there are some people that behave out of religion, but are very few. I would put in this way: the younger generation is nationalistic and secular, the older generation is traditional, not religious.

All of this is very interesting, you are actually giving answers to many of my questions. You are providing me an overview over a culture and I feel very close to what you say, I feel that it is very similar to what it is going on in Italy, from where I come from, in Israel, where I actually live. Sometimes I say, maybe without even knowing the deeper meaning of it, that we, our generation is experiencing an existential crisis. We are completely devoted to the idea of freedom and to a process of "individualization", for which we put ourself away from any cultural or social "definition". But what is the object of our freedom often is not clear, what do we want to be free from?

Writing my thesis I found very enlightening the famous quote by Nietzsche, according to which "God is dead! And we have killed him!". What I think is interesting is that the death of God puts in discussion every other thing in life, any system of values, even the possibility to see the light or to experience the world, revealing a very deep interconnection of meanings. I think that nowadays, and I don't speak about religion, in many cases we are only able to see the surface of some paths, behaviours and traditions, making very easy the possibility of killing the "gods", that appear actually as "stupid" or too conservative, when we don't see their deeper meaning, also from a social point of view.

We are also abandoning the spaces of these "gods", and I think that this leads to a disorientation. In many cases, as the poet Mois Benarroch suggests with the title of one of his works, the commercial spaces become the new "cathedrals".

Yes, I agree with you and I think that Palestinians are living in a very deep

existential crisis. Comparing with many other Arabic countries, Palestinians are more progressive, and I really see pertinent what Hunter Thompson wrote: “Human beings are the only creatures on Earth who claim a God, and the only living thing that behaves like it hasn’t got one.” As I told you, here we should speak about tradition more than religion, remembering also that in the Arabic culture, religion means esteem, appearing part of the religious tradition leads to respect. For Palestinians, religion in itself is not part of life. Politics and the conflict, especially for the young, are the large part of life. Young Palestinians live the existential crisis of not being fully “European-modern”, as they aspire, but at the same time of not being anymore part of the tradition of the past (also from political point of view), in which they don’t believe anymore.

You see here, especially in Ramallah, the development of a crazy consumer society. This has historical-political reasons. People have now the access to goods that for a long time were denied and they developed a strong desire for. The policy of the PA under the guide of the President Abu Mazen and the Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah moves from the idea that in order to reduce violence people should possess goods and not being in the situation of not having anything to lose. This led to the creation of an extended system of banking loans, through which many people bought cars and houses. But also increased the difference between a upper class (who have access to these loans) and a lower one, making the middle class disappearing, which is for me the first indication of corruption. On the other hand we are a consumer society because we almost don’t produce anything, we are based on imports from Israel and other neighbour countries. This is directly related with the Oslo accords, that, even if many people think that are the base of a two-state solution of the conflict, deeply prevent the autonomy of Palestine. I think I am one of the few Palestinians that has really read the text of Oslo, in which many economic constrains are set on Palestine, even the amount of cows that a single farm can grow.

Going back, I think that religion represent for many people the way to get out of the daily life sufferings, the easy way to do it, to not be part of this existential crisis. It is easy, through religion, to avoid what Sartre called the “fear of the freedom”, of having so many possibilities, infinite, that they paralyse any choice. Religion gives to people only two options, God or the mess, so it is easy to chose, without the fear of missing out on the other options. For who don’t believe in religion, all existence is about finding the way to add minutes to our lives, and the fear of missing out is always there.

Talking about spaces, I do believe that there are “spiritual spaces” in which I love to stay, such as the Dome of the Rock. I used sometimes to go to study in the



Dome of the Rock, and also in the Holy Sepulchre, I found in them a very calm and favourable atmosphere. This kind of building become somehow “personal temples”. But what I appreciate in this building is not the divine, is the human dimension, because the divine always becomes religious and political, the human dimension is pure.

These are very big topics, that get to the inner feeling and questions about life, beyond this specific research. What I wonder, going a bit back to it, is if we need a moment of pause in our lives, to forget about all this “missing out”, to find ourselves, in a certain way, free from any other need. It is for this that I would like to design this space and I find interesting that when I think about it, I always see a man that takes a break and goes alone to it, I don’t even imagine his community. But then happens that, for instance, yesterday I was in Be’er Sheva and I visited the Monument to the Negev Brigade, a place that I found similar to what I am thinking about, and suddenly it was full of people, gathering together and spending time. But the image of this guy that need a pause stays, and sometimes I wonder if it is just me that feel it.

No, I don’t think is just you. One of the interesting things if you see lately, is that there is an increase, especially here in Ramallah, in sports like tai-chi or yoga, that deal with meditation. This is the modern man’s way of looking for spirituality without referring to God. I think that now people are beginning to wake up and, as you said, they need that moment, in the middle of a life based on consumerism and go, go, go all the time. Not everyone, somebody can’t afford that one minute. I think that people are beginning to wake up and wonder that maybe there is sometime more in life than just consumerism and materialism, that’s why you see a lot of these new sports, where the idea is once again to feel connected with the universe, without having to go to God.

It’s funny when you think to a place like this, cause some people will think that a place in which you can connect with God can be like an empty cave, where you go by yourself and connect, or it could be something like you find in a mosque, for instance. The idea of a mosque, especially when you pray, is that the unity of the voice and the unity of standing one next to each other, toe to toe, shoulder to shoulder, is where you find God. Some people believe you can find God in solitude, like the prophets in the caves, other in the unity.

I think that when it comes to religion there is this idea of community in a certain way. I don’t know much about Islam actually, but in Christianity the gathering

198. Friends boys school (first building, 1901), 2017. Ramallah

together of the community represents somehow the manifestation of God, in the community that gathers together in the church, archetypical in its cross-shape. Also in Judaism I think it's similar, even from the name in Hebrew of the synagogue, bet ha-knesset, the house of gathering, and the need of being at least ten male adults to start the praying in the synagogue. In religion I think there is this dimension of the collectivity, but if we speak about spirituality, and religion has a strong spiritual component, the point of view changes. I think that this is what I am looking for, even if maybe I underestimate the role that the community plays.

According to Islam you have to pray five times a day and, in a way, to do it with the community in the mosque it is better than doing it alone, it's worth more to God and you have to do it, if you have the possibility to. But there is a practical limit then and you can't always be with the community, so you can do it by yourself, and this is why there is the Friday prayer. On Friday, you shouldn't do it by yourself, you have to do with the community, in a ceremony, and it is shorter than the regular praying, as the ceremony worth half of the praying. I can't do comparison with the other religions on this, but if we speak about architecture, the significance of the Kotel, of the Holy Sepulchre, of the Dome of the Rock is entirely political, this I can guarantee. Even the Holy Sepulchre church itself, if you look at all the Christians sectors involved, it is about existence and politics more than religion, if you look at the Kotel is the symbol of Israeli existence, when you look at the Dome of the Rock it is not Islamic, it is Palestine versus Israel. This is why here it is very difficult to really just look at religious temples as a place of worship and spirituality, because they are so steeped in political mythology.

You already mentioned how Palestine became for the young generation a sort of religion, but do you think that the Palestinian nationality is related with a religious identity?

Young Palestinians are way more politicized than their parents and grandparents. I don't know why, maybe because religion was away from them to make sense of the conflict and everything else, but today the politics of the conflict has replaced religion. And if the Palestinian cause was a pure Islamic one, I think it would alienate a lot of people. Here you ask a lot of people in the West Bank what do they think about Hamas and they don't like it. They would feel proud of the fighters and the fight but in terms of the agenda, they don't like it.

I recently read a report of the Pew Research Center about the sprawl of religion in

the world. It stated that globally, the amount of people not affiliated to any religion is going to decrease in the next decades. I was surprised by it but if then you go to look at the data about the "First World" countries, the amount of unaffiliated is going to increase, while will be the "Third World" countries, far more religious, to register the largest population growth. This was confirming my thesis that in the context that I am considering, people are moving away from religion.

Then I found an article by a German philosopher and sociologist, Jürgen Habermas, that wrote that there is a direct connection between the uncertainty of existence and the religious need. So, if now I consider Ramallah, that seems a city with good quality of life, makes sense that people, especially young are less religious, but if we consider rural areas of the West Bank, do you think religion plays a more important role?

Yes, I would definitely say so. There is an agenda, as I said, to make Ramallah a liberal place, from the PA and Abu Mazen. The fact that there is a lot of NGOs and UN organizations, mixed with foreigners has made it more liberal, but i think it is politicised.

About the sprawl of religion, I would like to say that I think that Islam is disappearing, but the number of Muslims is increasing. This is the contradiction which is that you have so many different movements and so many Muslims that are devoted to the Muslim identity but know very little about Islam. I think that practising the actual core of the religion, the true values of it, weather it is Christianity, Islam or Judaism, is disappearing. However, the number of people who profit from the name of Islam, Christianity or Judaism is increasing. So you are right, the more desperate things will get, the more people will try to find a meaning for their lives and if they don't have it from culture, education or science, they are going to find it in myths and religion.

We all need something bigger then us. Look for instance at the Communists, that worship Marx, because we look at ourselves and we are not important, nor impressive, but we always need something more impressive, weather is a prophet, Lenin or Descartes. We always project our shortcomings, we always look for somebody that doesn't have all those shortcomings, it is a way for us to deal with our own limitation, I think.

WITH PETER ABU SHANAB AND BENJIE TAL'OR

On the 10th of March I had the opportunity to meet the architect Peter Abu Shanab and the geographer Benjie Tal'or in Jerusalem, going then together to visit the Arab Christian village of Taybeh, in the West Bank. Benjie is an Israeli friend of mine, and speaking with him about this thesis, he told me that I could not miss a conversation with his friend Peter, a very deep “man of faith” as he likes to call him. To describe him Benjie quoted the Seven Pillar of Wisdom by Lawrence of Arabia: “All men dream: but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake up in the day to find it was vanity, but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible”. Peter is a dreamer of the day and Benjie as well.

Peter, a Palestinian Roman Orthodox Christian, Holylander explained to us how Taybeh represents for him a mission, since the first moment he met this place in 1976. It is a village in which he wants to work, to build, to create a better community and place. Taybeh, 30 kilometres north-east from Jerusalem, is a small centre of about 2000 inhabitants, full of abandoned buildings, and, as Peter pointed out, is probably the only Palestinian village in the West Bank that is fully Christian. At the same time it is one of the most ancient human settlement founded in this region and it is present in the Old Testament as Ophra and in the New Testament as Ephraim, the village in which Jesus spent time with his disciples before his Passion.

The cornerstone of our visit were the ruins “*Al Khader*”, of the ancient Byzantine Church of St George, dating back to the 4th-century, with important restorations and additions during the Crusaders period. It is an overwhelming place, in which the spaces of the church are still recognizable but the atmosphere is completely different, walking in ruins open to the sky and to the Judaeen desert. The site's sacredness refers to the biblical story of Gideon, that in this place is believed to have destroyed the altar of Baal, Canaanite divinity, and

Judges 6:24 Then Gideon built an Altar there unto the Lord, and called it Iehouah shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah, of the Abi-Ezrites.

Peter also told us that nowadays Muslims and Christians still keep on doing



199. Peter Abu
Shanab,
2017.
Taybeh,
West Bank

animal sacrifices in this place.

Peter is an architect and the chairman of the NGO *Holylanders*, whose aim is the preservation of the Christian heritage in the Holy Land. His activity includes the restoration of buildings in the Old City of Jerusalem and in other Christian sites but also the preservation of the Christian identity, a minority in both Israel and the West Bank, contrasting its emigration. Central element of his projects in Taybeh is the dream of building a “Peace Altar (or Tower)” next to the ruins of the Church of St George, becoming a place for peace, open to any identity, culture or religion. He showed me plans, elevations and views of this project, that he really means to realize. I found in Peter’s idea a connection with the aim of my project and I was very interested in having a conversation with Peter and Benjie about these thoughts.

Peter, visiting this site has been a very deep experience to me, I felt a deep “spiritual” atmosphere in those ruins. Now I am even more curious about your project for this place, how did this idea come to you?

P: If you read the bible, and the chapter about Judges and Gideon, you find in the verses explained that Gideon built the “Tower of Peace”, and in the Bible it



is written that it is still standing, however now you don't see it anymore. So in a way, to get the claim of the Bible in the right way, the "Tower of Peace" should be standing. So this was the idea, to build it.

B: My question now is: was the tower inspired by the reality in the field in Taybeh, or you had this idea and then you looked for a place to do it?

P: It actually was inspired by the verses about Gideon, directly connected to the place we just saw, and the fact that he built this "pillar" especially for peace.

You told me that this place can become a sort of "temple", not just for Christians, right?

P: Exactly, this would be a place of worship for believers in one God, for those who believe that we come from Adam, story shared along Christians, Jews and Muslims. This is one story that joins us all.

B: This is the ultimate monotheistic dream!

It is very interesting to me, as I am doing a project for my thesis in Jerusalem. In it I am designing places that are not related with any religion but with a feeling of "spirituality", of the "sacred" maybe.

P: That's exactly the idea, not being connected with Christianity, or Judaism or Islam, but with the shared common belief, the offspring of Abraham. And I have a theory, about the origin of the name "Palestinian". It comes from a Greek word, *palaistis* (παλαιστής) that indicates the person who wrestles. Also the word "Israel" has the meaning of the "person who wrestles with God" and its Greek translation is again *palaistis*. From these words derives that the land of the *palaistis* is Palestine.

But what I am actually planning to do now it's a town planning for Taybeh. I called it "Taybeh 2033", underlining the anniversary for the 2000 years since Jesus entered Taybeh, before his crucifixion. I would like to see this town with 20000 people inhabiting it.

So you think that would be important that there are many Christian that could live here?

P: Christians are emigrating, from Jerusalem, from the West Bank, in order to try to find a better life. The community of spirit has gone, you don't have anymore a community of Christians, just minorities here and there. So I have the hope of

200. St George church
ruins (entrance),
2017.
Taybeh,
West Bank

having a town in which it is possible to share the community spirit of celebrations, this is all part of who we are.

Christians are leaving because they have little possibility to work, to have a house, to eat, so if you can provide them these things, and show them a little bit of future, things could be different.

B: But that's a town plan which would take three generations, at least, to fulfil. You are the first generation and then who will come after you will have to continue this project.

P: Yes, it is a project for the municipality, not just mine. The mayor will have to promote such a vision, and you need to have people that works with you. It is a period in which nothing is working and you need to start and "initiate" people but these people don't see the possibility to make it happen within their lifetime.

B: Because they are cynical, everybody has become cynical in the West Bank after fifty years of Israeli occupation, they can only do something that has concrete roots and a good reason to do it. Maybe what is needed is a town planning as a private initiative, having then endless meetings in endless homes for people to understand the capacity of this project.

This is very interesting. Few weeks ago I was speaking with my friend Amer, professor of psychology in Ramallah, that told me that Christian represent a minority, both in Israel compared with Jews and in the West Bank, compared with Muslims. And he has the feeling that Christians are so by faith, but in a certain way Muslim by culture. But in this case your plan is to create a community, where maybe the Christian culture can develop, within the Palestinian national identity.

P: It's true, we still keep some of the Islamic culture, but there are some difference as well, we eat pork and drink alcohol, this is our culture and we do what we want here. You need to give to the new generations a future or something to hope for. If you can build a community where everything is available around them, schools, work, housing, what else does a person want? It is more or less the same planning for having settlements, but it is a village lifestyle. But some Christian people are not supporting the idea of "secluding" Christians in one area. They don't want to be a community that lives in what they see like a "ghetto".

B: I still think that your project of the "Tower of Peace" or *axis mundi*, should



201. *St George church ruins,*
2017.
Taybeh,
West Bank

be located in Jerusalem.

P: It could be, but the problem is that we are always fed up with confrontation. If you think about East-Jerusalemites, they don't participate in municipal elections, not because they are not allowed to, but they decided to not be part of the Israeli municipal elections. There is another thinking, that pushes for participation, but the majority of Palestinians don't accept this, they don't want to be part of what they see as "collaboration with the occupation". I tried to push for participation of East Jerusalemites as a separate locality yet part of a united city, but there is no participation, and you are in a losing battle.

It is again related with the problem of the "identity". The fact that you have strong identities creates the conflict. At the same time you are suggesting that Christians should become a stronger identity. So, do you think that it is important to be aware of one's identity to have better confrontation or the most the identity is strong, the more there will conflict?

P: I lived my childhood in the Old City of Jerusalem. Even though it was one city, it was divided into quarters and I was living in the Christian quarter. That was my all life, that area. You did ventures in the Jewish or Muslim areas but within your area you felt that you could live your culture. I am not saying that you need to forget about all the other identities, but at the same time there is something special in your community that you should to keep, your traditions.

Taybeh has been a Christian village for 2000 years and people have kept their culture because they own the land, they didn't sell it to outsiders. It remained somehow a family tribal community.

Going back for a second to the idea of your project of the "Tower of Peace", I am curious to know how did you design it. I am finding hard and challenging designing a project that has no function, it seems harder to make choices.

P: Yes, it is hard to say. What I really think is that in this kind of project you should feel as being driven more than driving the process.

I saw that the main element in your proposal is a very tall (33 meters high) pyramidal element, the "tower" itself. How did you get to this shape?

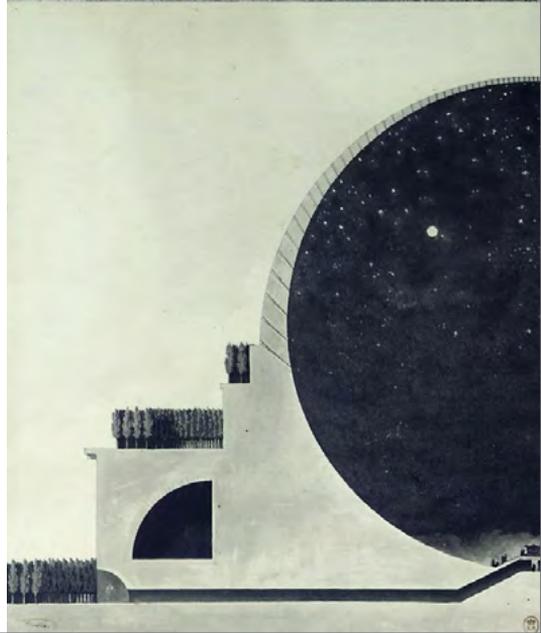
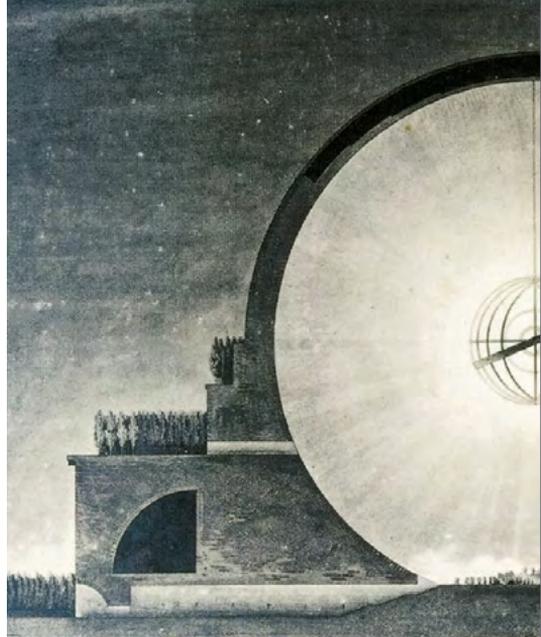
P: This was actually mainly influenced by an architect whom I was working with at the time in which I developed this proposal. I had in mind more "traditional" shapes, an idea of tower combined with the one of the dome. But the connection with the sky, the tension towards it, is always the central point. And I imagine that the building should be realized by 144000 stones, a number that has great significance for all the religions. Could be then related with a marketing idea, "selling" each stone to one donor in memory of a loved one that support this creation.

202. St George church
ruins (gate wetted by
sacrificial blood),
2017.
Taybeh,
West Bank

I have a last curiosity: I noticed that on the side of this tower is present the symbol of the cross. But you are talking about an universal proposal, so could we imagine that the cross can be taken away?

This is exactly the point, you can definitely remove it, or add the star and the crescent, but the meaning of this building doesn't need this symbol.



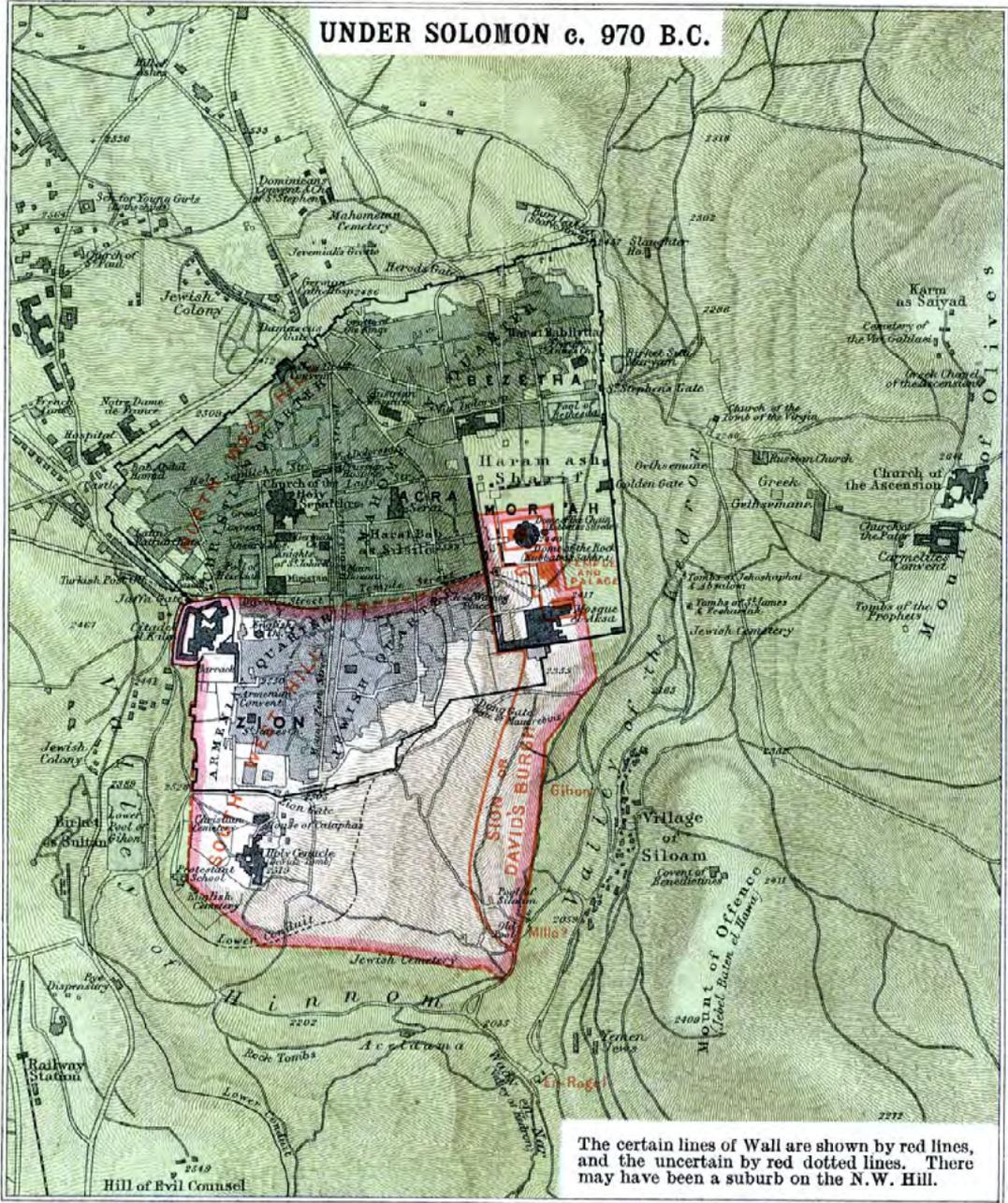


APPENDIX B
JERUSALEM'S MAPS AND DRAWINGS

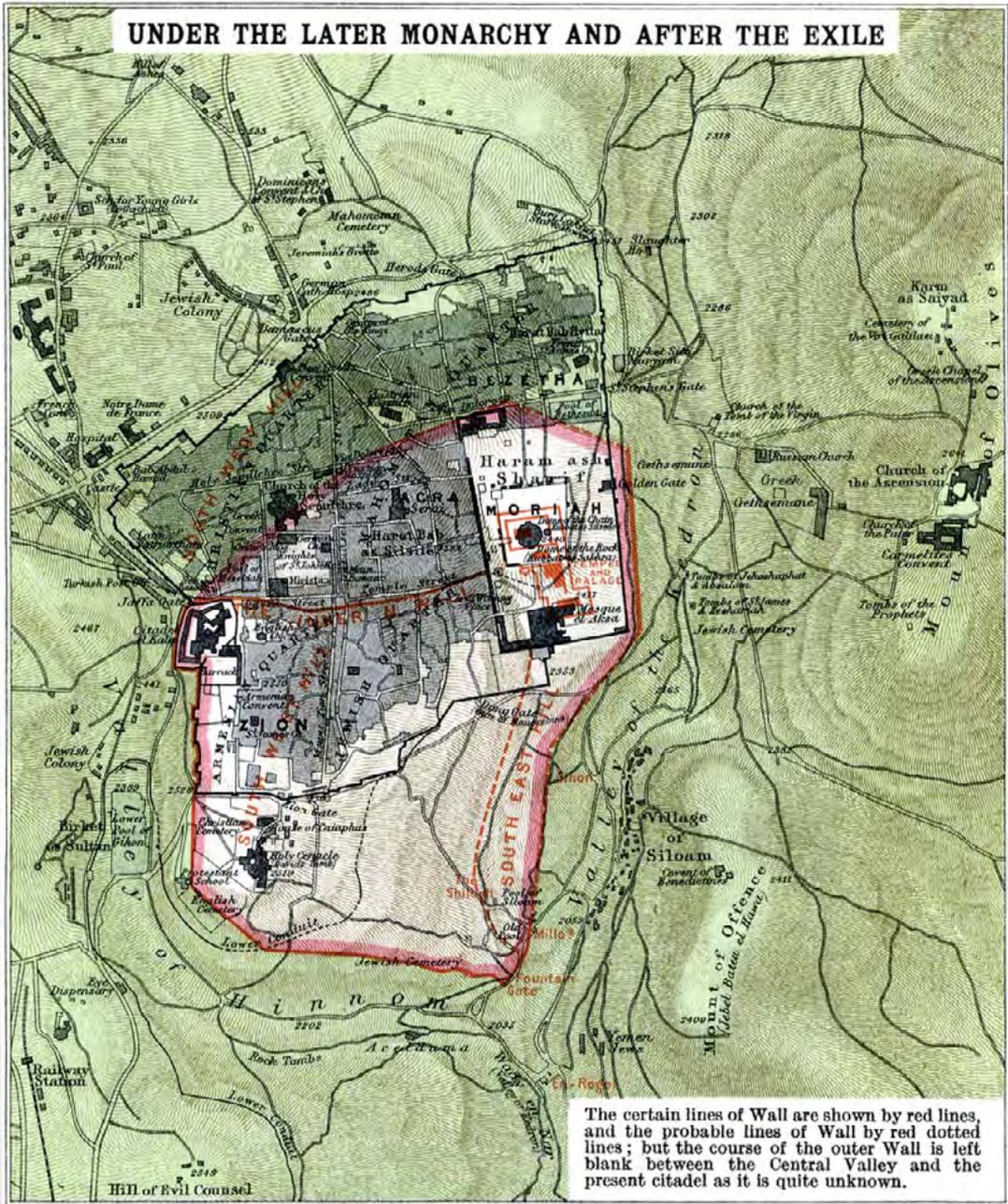


203. *The Holy City of Jerusalem), Madaba Mosaic Map, 6th-century. Madaba, Jordan*

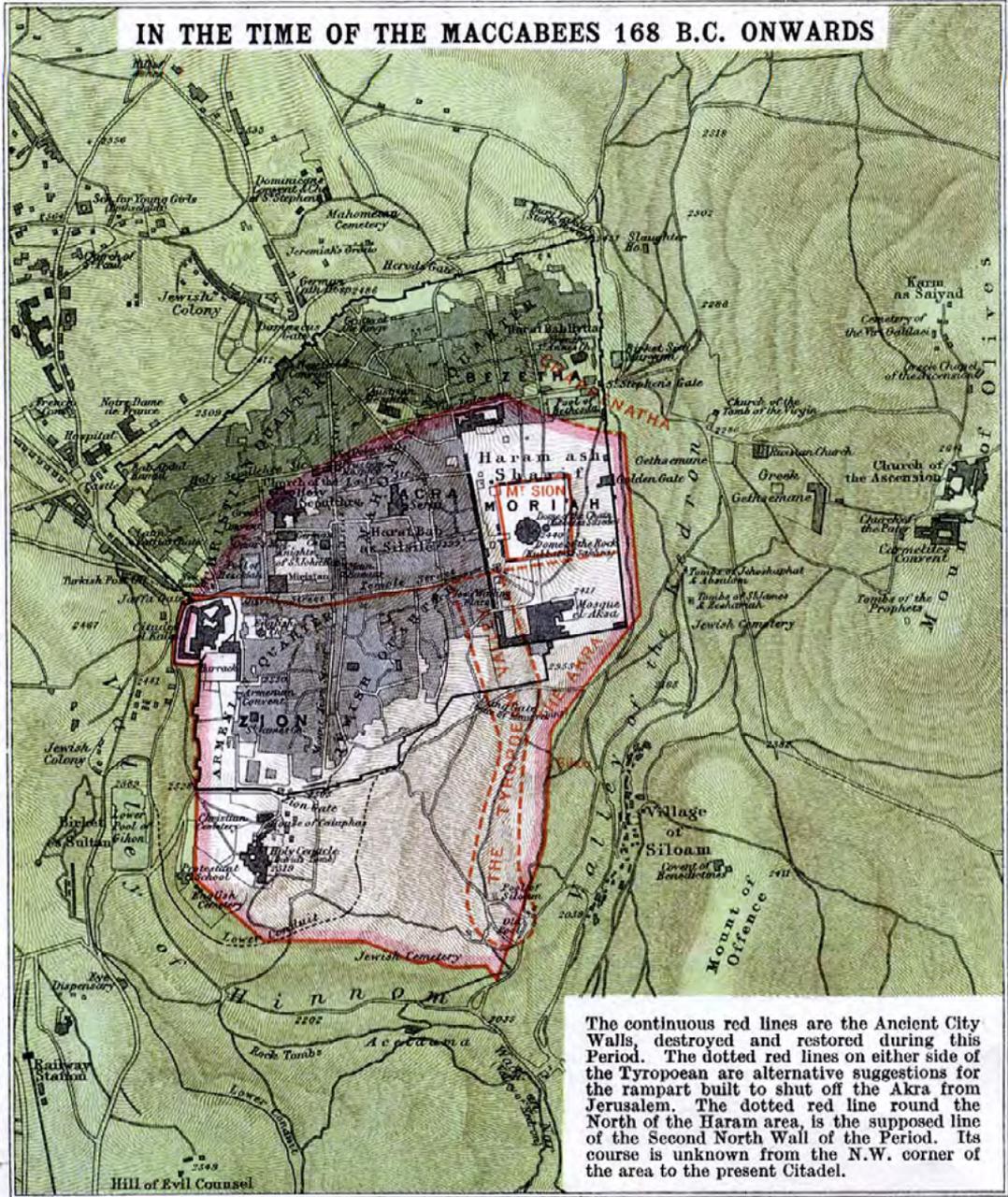




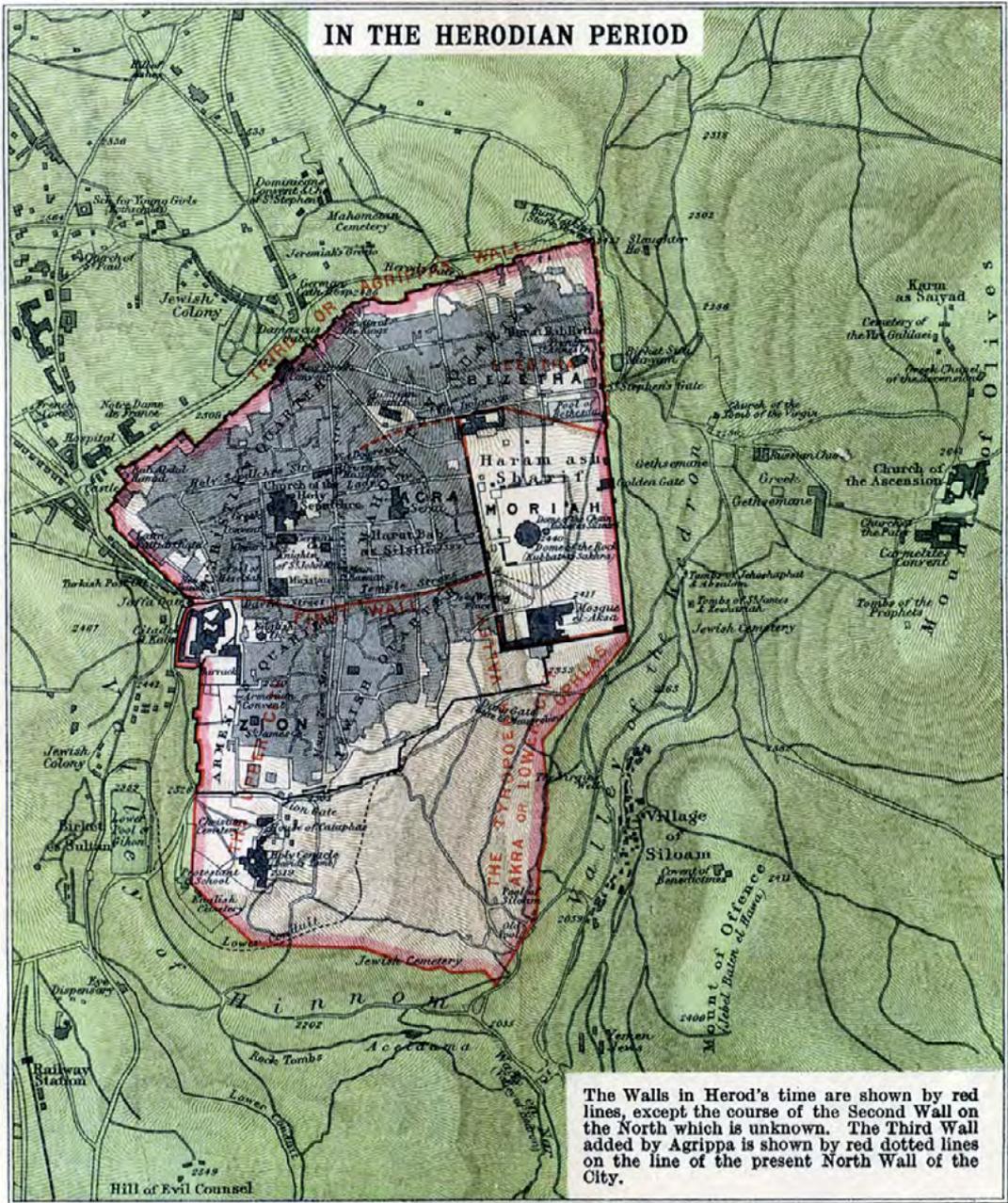
205. George A. Smith,
Under Solomon c. 970 B.C.,
From *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the Holy Land*,
Hodder and Stoughton, 1915



206. George A. Smith,
Under the Later Monarchy and after the Exile,
 From *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the Holy Land*,
 Hodder and Stoughton, 1915



207. George A. Smith,
In the Time of the Maccabees 168 B.C. onwards,
 From *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the Holy Land,*
 Hodder and Stoughton, 1915



208. George A. Smith,
In the Herodian Period,
 From *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the Holy Land*,
 Hodder and Stoughton, 1915

B. JERUSALEM'S MAPS AND DRAWINGS



210. Georg Braun and Frans Hogenberg
Map of Jerusalem (Ezechielis. V. Haec est Jerusalem. Ego eam in medio Gentium posui, et in eius circuitu terras),
1575



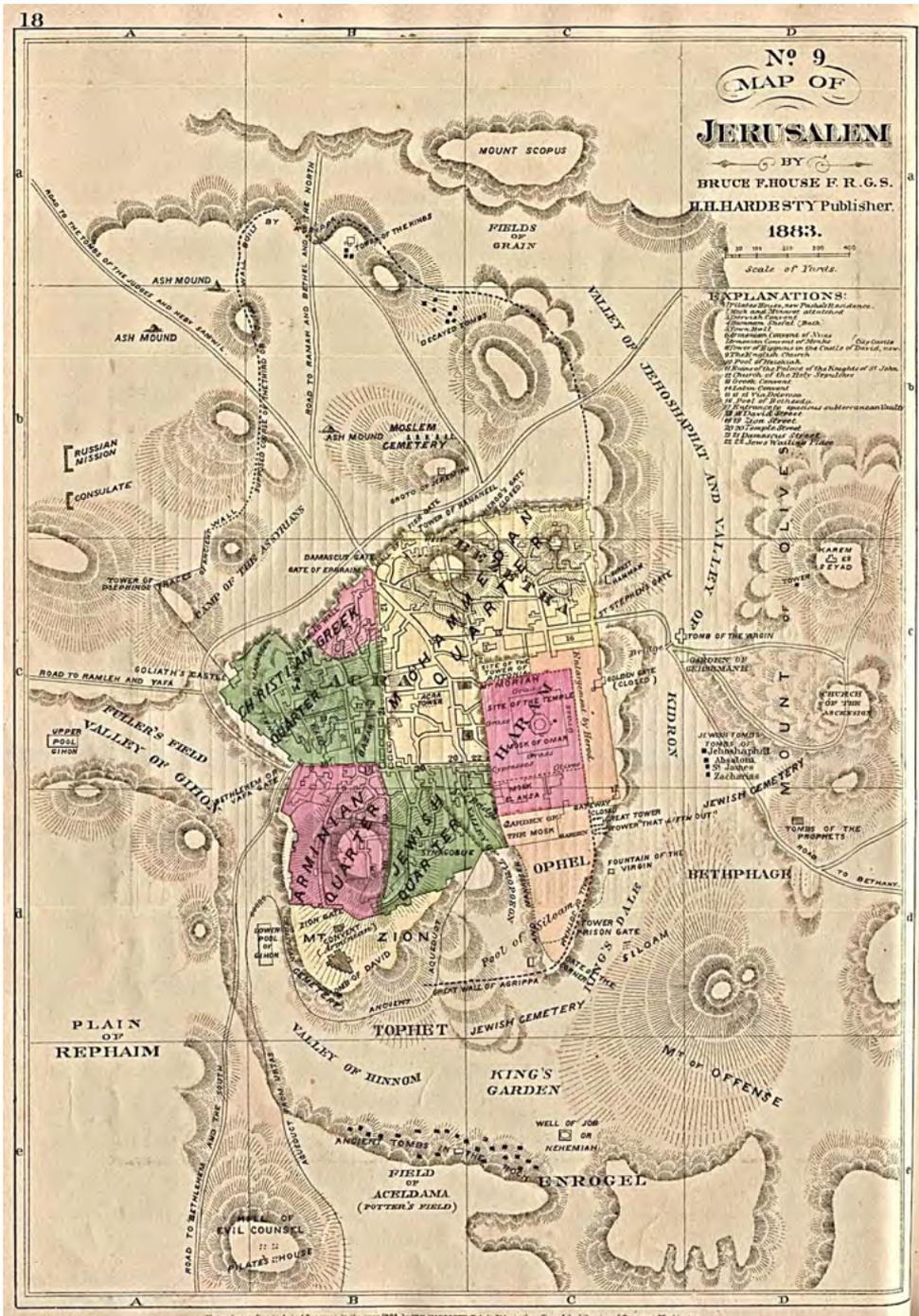
211. Map of Jerusalem (*De Heylige en Wytvermaerde Stadt Jerusalem eerst genaemt Salem Genesis 14 Vers 18*),
From *Korte beschryvinge van de landschappen des werelts enz.*,
by Visscher, Nicolaes, Visscher, Claes Jansz, Broeck, Abraham van den, 1660



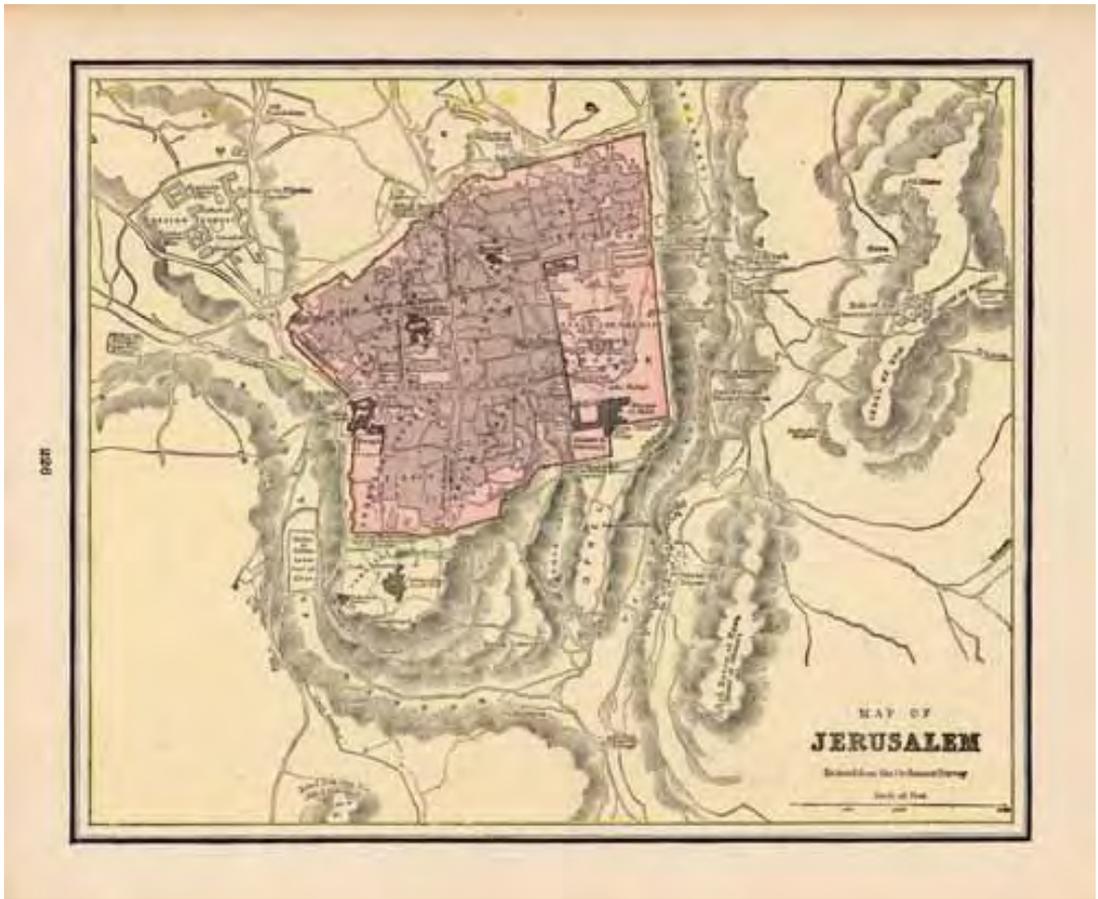
212. David Roberts R.A.,
Jerusalem from the North,
1839



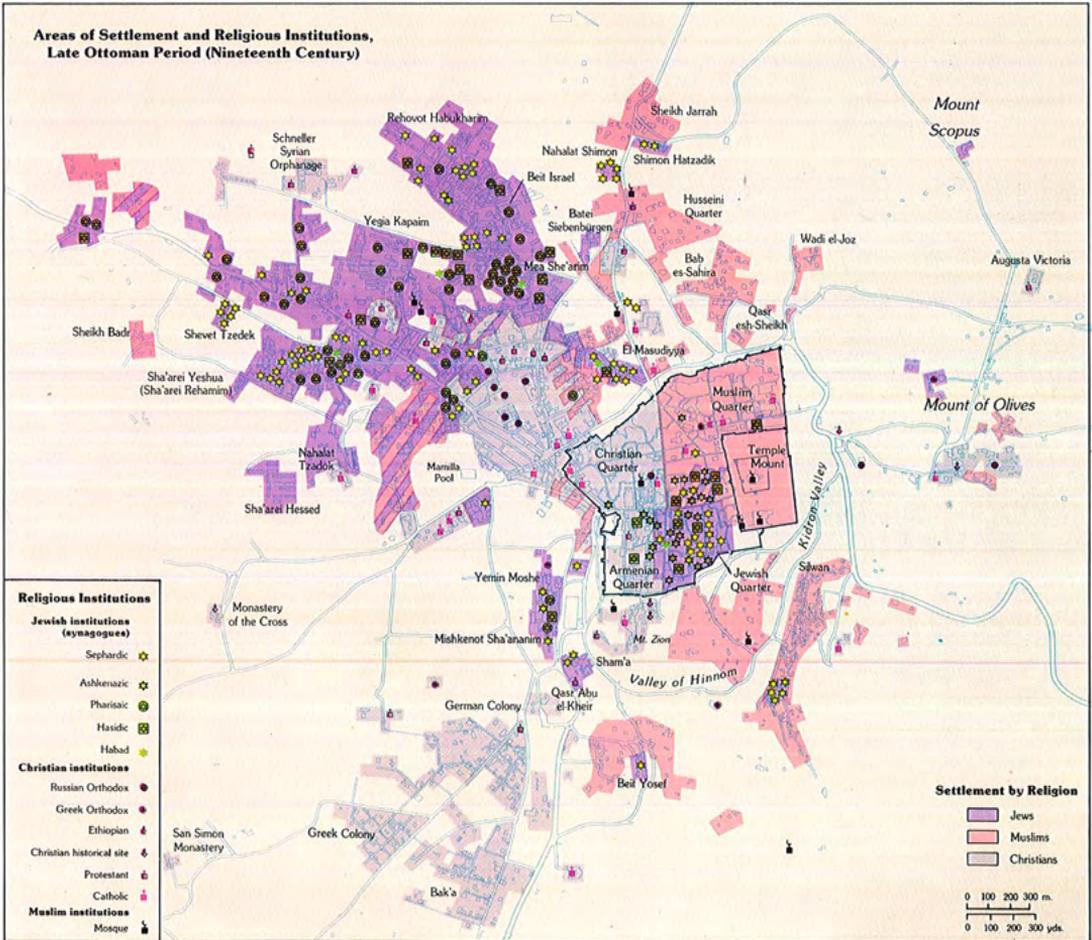
213. David Roberts R.A.,
Jerusalem, from the Mount of Olives,
1839



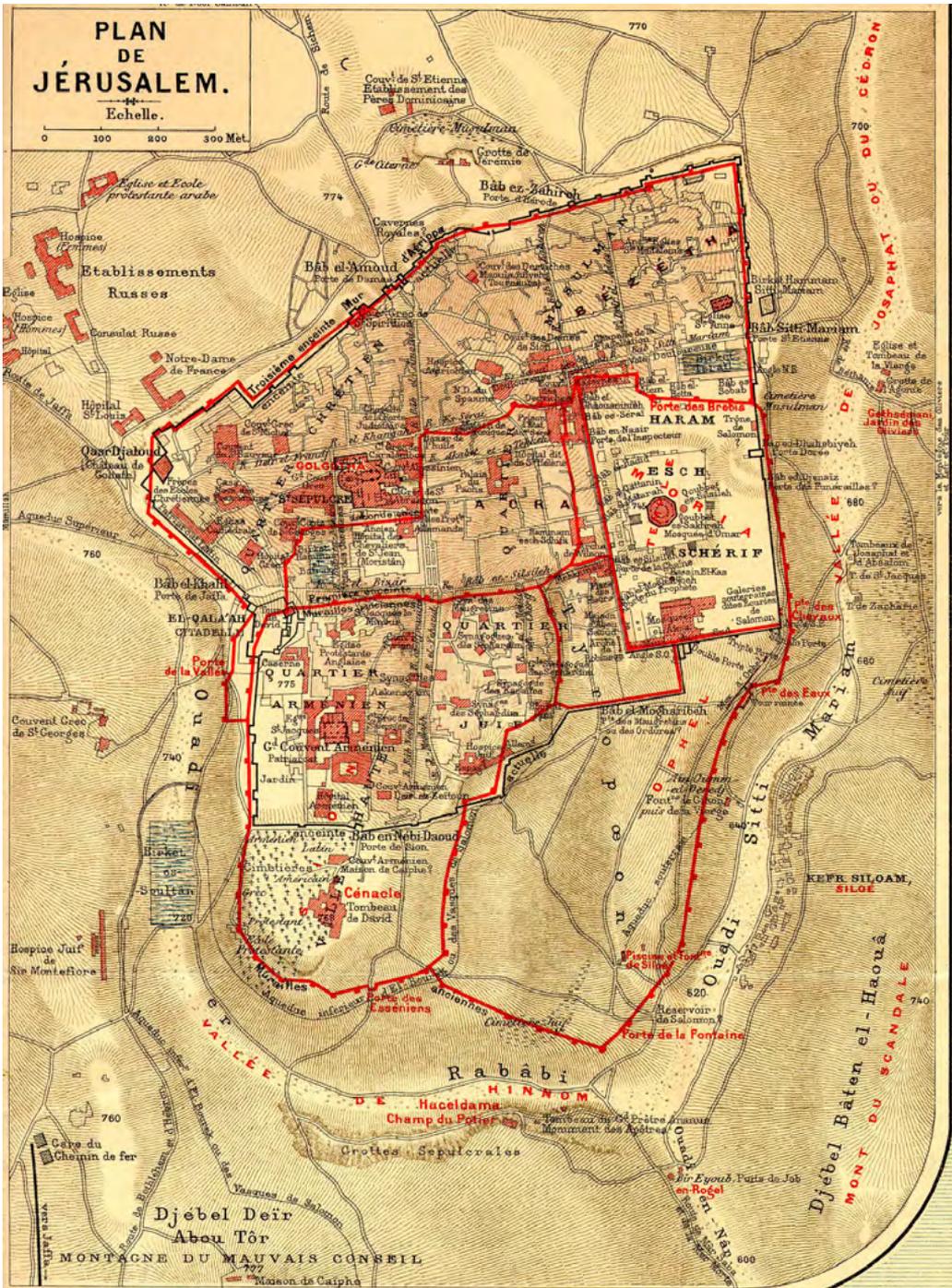
214. Bruce F. House,
Map of Jerusalem (1883),
From *Hardesty's Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia Illustrated*,
H.H. Hardesty & Company, 1884



216. George F. Cram,
Map of Jerusalem,
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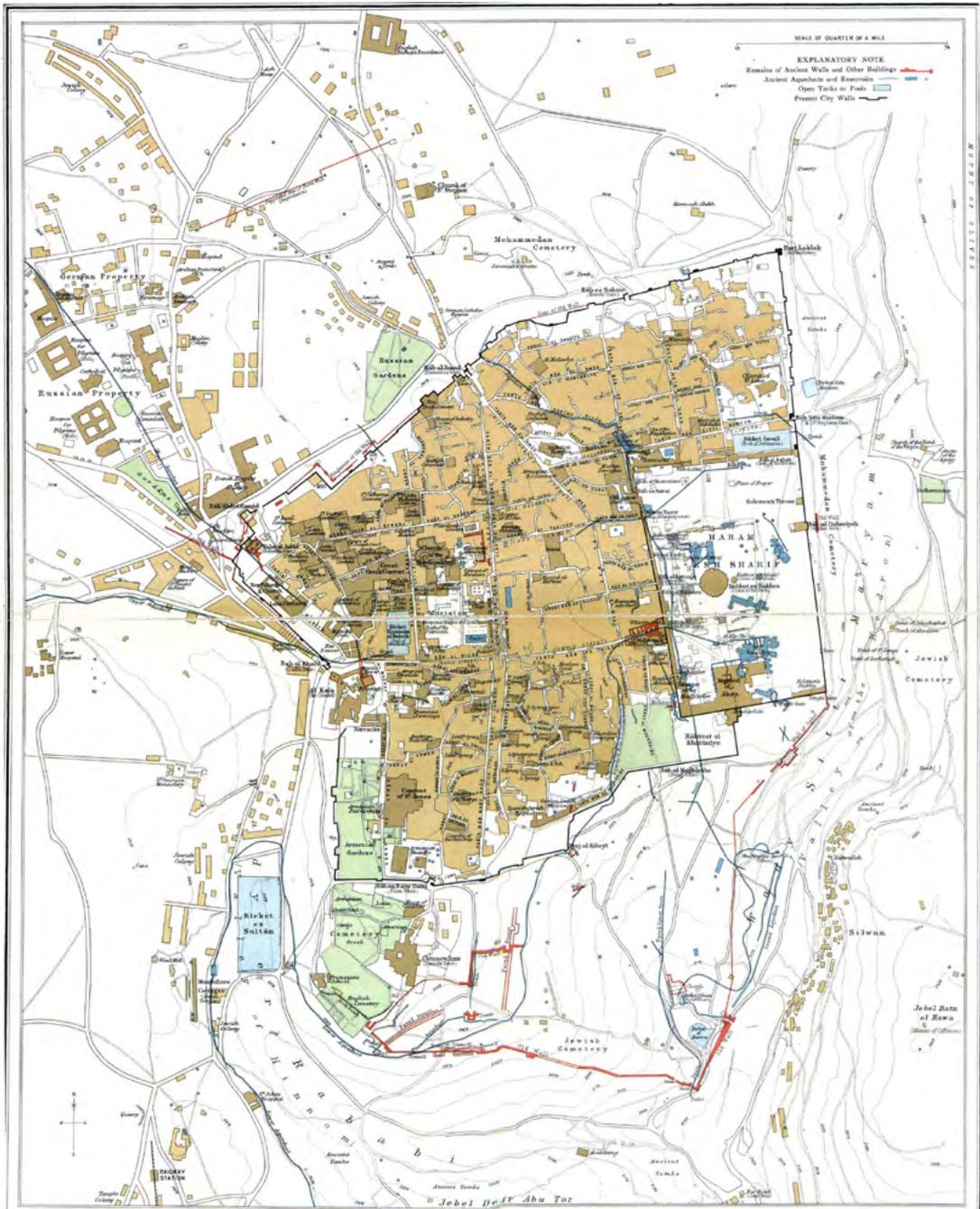


217. Areas of Settlement and Religious Institutions, Late Ottoman Period (19th-century)
 From *The illustrated atlas of Jerusalem*,
 by Dan Bahat, Carta, 1986



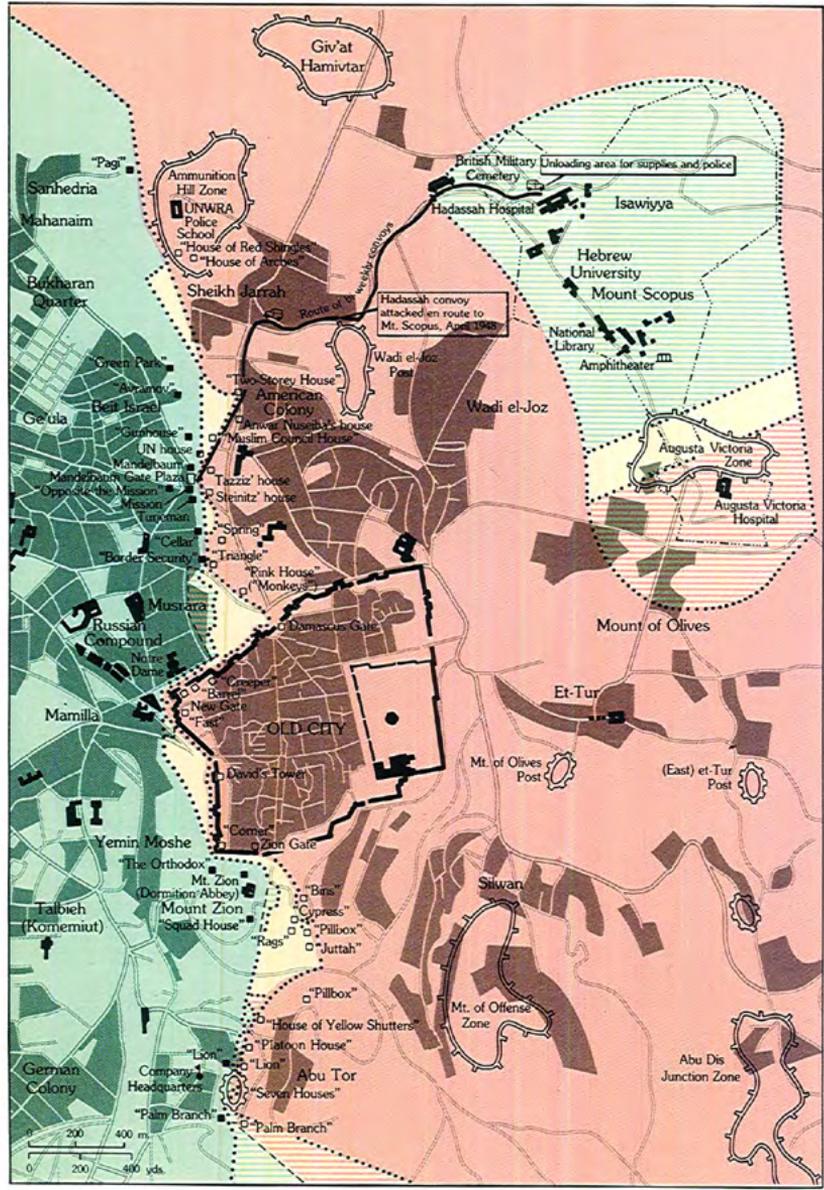
218. Plan de Jérusalem,
 From Carte de la Palestine ancienne et moderne,
 by L Thuillier, H Rollet and Adolphe Alphonse François Legendre, Letouzey & Ané, 1900

B. JERUSALEM'S MAPS AND DRAWINGS

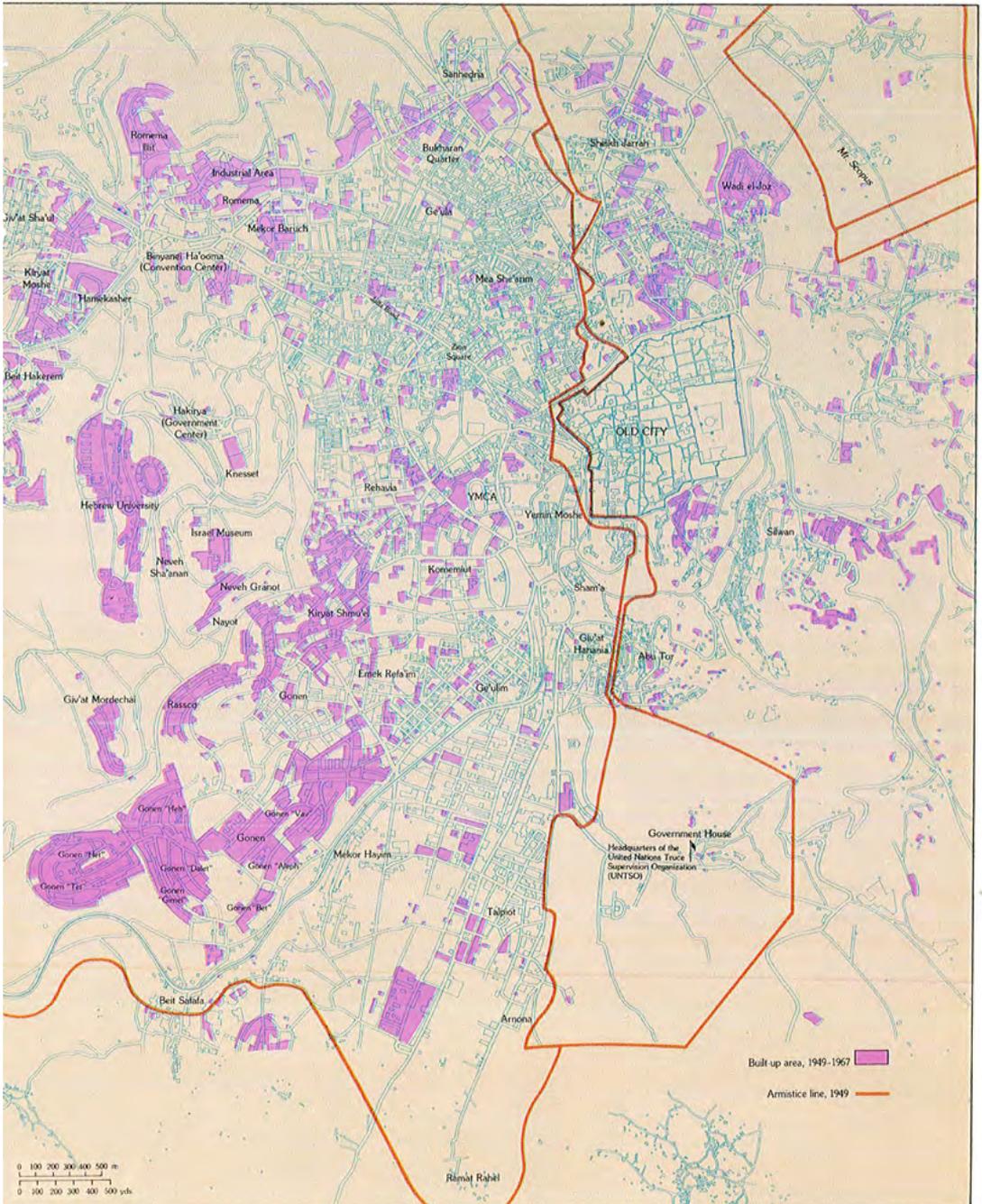


220. George A. Smith,
Modern Jerusalem Illustrating Recent Discoveries
From *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the Holy Land*.
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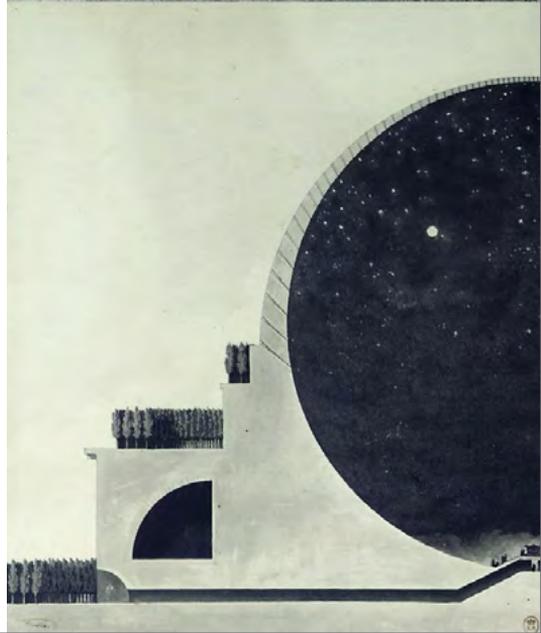
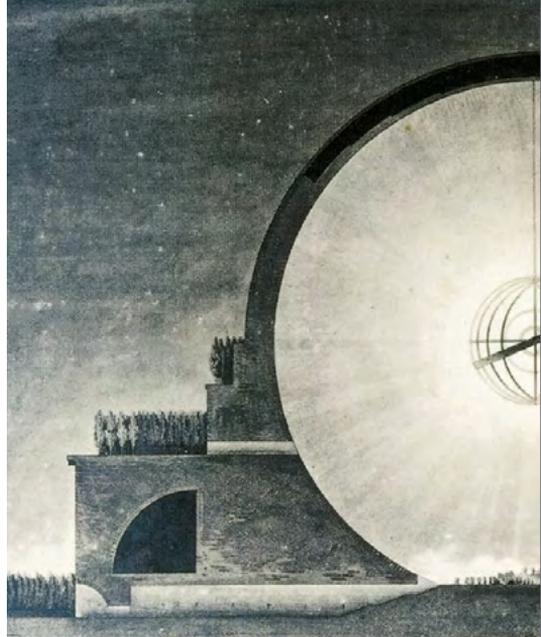
B. JERUSALEM'S MAPS AND DRAWINGS



222. *The City Boundary (1949)*,
 From *The illustrated atlas of Jerusalem*,
 by Dan Bahat, Carta, 1986



223. Built-up area (1949-1967),
 From *The illustrated atlas of Jerusalem*,
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JERUSALEM, APRIL 2017

